

The Growth of the
British Civil Service
1780—1939

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by
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CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	19
II PUBLIC OFFICES AND PUBLIC OFFICERS AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	22
<i>How Public Officers were Recruited</i>	24
<i>How Public Officers were Paid</i>	27
<i>The Organization of Public Offices</i>	30
<i>Checks and Controls</i>	30
<i>Survey</i>	33
III CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM OF THE CONDITION OF PUBLIC OFFICES	36
<i>Sinecures</i>	38
<i>Emoluments and Pensions</i>	39
<i>Appointments</i>	41
<i>Miscellaneous Considerations</i>	42
<i>Survey</i>	43
IV. REFORMS OF PUBLIC OFFICES, 1780-1840	45
<i>Improving Checks and Controls</i>	47
<i>Suppression of Sinecures</i>	52
<i>Pay and Pensions</i>	56
<i>Recruitment and Conditions of Work</i>	65
<i>Survey</i>	69

PART TWO

V. THE BACKGROUND OF COMING CHANGES	75
<i>The Administration of India</i>	78
<i>Oxford and Cambridge</i>	81
<i>Personal Links</i>	84
<i>Survey</i>	85

14 THE GROWTH OF THE BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE

CHAPTER	PAGE
VI. FRESH INQUIRIES INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE	87
<i>The Condition of the Service</i>	93
<i>Pay and Pensions</i>	96
<i>Criticisms and Schemes for Reform</i>	97
<i>Survey</i>	102
VII. THE COUNTRY AND REFORM	104
VIII THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION AND OTHER CHANGES	110
<i>Attitudes to Reform</i>	112
<i>A Select Committee Reviews the Situation</i>	116
<i>Introduction of Recruiting by Open Competitive Examinations</i>	119
<i>Survey</i>	122
IX THE REFORMS OF THE EIGHTEEN-SEVENTIES	124
<i>Copyists and other Mechanical Workers</i>	125
<i>The Playfair Commission</i>	129
<i>Outcome of the Playfair Recommendations</i>	134
<i>Survey</i>	136
X CONSOLIDATION	137
<i>The Lower Division</i>	141
<i>Copyists</i>	142
<i>Unsolved Difficulties</i>	143
<i>Survey</i>	144
XI READJUSTMENTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE	146
<i>The Higher Division</i>	149
<i>The Problem of Mechanical Work Solved</i>	151
<i>Co-ordination and Control</i>	153
<i>Survey</i>	153
XII. SUPERANNUATION, 1834-1900	155

CONTENTS

15

PART THREE

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	163
<i>Methods of Recruitment</i>	165
<i>Promotion</i>	174
<i>Co-ordination and Control</i>	177
<i>Relations of Employer and Employed</i>	184
<i>Women in the Civil Service</i>	188
<i>The Great War and the Civil Service</i>	191
<i>Twentieth-Century Survey</i>	193
XIV SUPERANNUATION IN THE - TWENTIETH CENTURY	196
XV THE CIVIL SERVANT AND HIS CONDUCT	200
XVI CONCLUSION	205
BIBLIOGRAPHY	213
INDEX	217

PART I

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“Historians are too much in the habit of regarding the ancien régime in England as a solid block which did not begin to crumble till about 1832. In reality a great reform movement began about 1780, and although this movement undoubtedly died down during the anti-Jacobin reaction, during the last years of the war it was once more in full swing”

ELIE HALÉVY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to trace the history of the Home Civil Service during the past century and a half. The expression "Civil Servant" has to-day a precise meaning; it describes "those servants of the Crown, other than holders of political or judicial offices, who are employed in a civil capacity, and whose remuneration is paid wholly and directly out of monies voted by Parliament."¹ The Superannuation Acts stipulate that in order to receive a pension a Civil Servant must hold his appointment directly from the Crown or be admitted into the Service with a certificate from the Civil Service Commissioners.² In 1938 these definitions covered 376,491 servants of the Crown³ serving in not far short of a hundred departments. The activities of this large body cover a very wide field, and touch the life of the citizen at many points.

The British Civil Service, in the course of its slow evolution, acquired characteristics which have been of great significance in British political and administrative history. There have grown up certain conditions of service: methods of recruitment by open competitive examination, by nomination and qualifying examination, by competitive interview, or by a combination of these devices; there are age limits for entry into the Service, and there is a compulsory age for retirement; Civil Servants are classified in grades and paid fixed salaries with regular increments; hours of labour and holidays are fixed. A strict code of discipline has been established which precludes Civil Servants from sitting in Parliament or from offering themselves for election until they have resigned their posts, they may not take part in political controversy, nor become involved in financial transactions which might entail a conflict between their private interests and their public duties.⁴ There are Acts such as the Official Secrets Acts and Corrupt Practices Acts to protect the State against unfaithful servants. Thus there have grown up conditions

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, P P., 1931, x, p. 4.

² MUSTOE, N. B. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), p. 25.

³ This figure excludes industrial staffs. *Statement Showing Staffs Employed in the Civil Service*, P P., 1937-38, xx.

⁴ For a brief summary of the conditions of the Service, see ROBSON, W. A. (ed.) *The British Civil Servant* (1937), chapter 1, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

aimed at securing appropriate appointments and a Service free from corruption. A machinery has been developed for dealing with disputes over conditions of work and payment. The ultimate control of the Service is vested in the Treasury, which has the power to make regulations-controlling the conduct of the establishments,¹ thus there is co-ordination

This co-ordinated professional service came into being gradually, by the adaptation of existing institutions and practices to meet changing needs and changing values. Its creation was the work neither of one man nor of one generation. The foundations of its organization were laid before the passing of the Reform Bill; its development was profoundly influenced by contemporary movements such as the reform of the Indian Civil Service and the reform of the universities.

The year in which this history opens is 1780. In that year there was appointed the first of an important series of Commissions of Inquiry into the administration of public business. The reports of these Commissions describe in some detail the way in which business was carried on in public offices. Those who drew them up were charged with the duty of criticism. Most of their proposals for reform met with parliamentary approbation. They embodied a complete change in the basis of the conduct of public business. Public revenue had been collected in a number of unco-ordinated offices; public expenditure had been controlled by no effective means of audit; those who worked in public offices had derived their emoluments from a great variety of sources, and Parliament was not responsible for voting the sums from which these payments were derived. Following the recommendations of the Commissioners, Parliament instituted reforms which changed the methods of collecting and accounting for the public revenue, and changed the conditions in many public offices. In 1816 an Act was passed by virtue of which Parliament took over the responsibility for the salaries of those employed in public offices.² This Act has been described as the statute which first created the Civil Service, converting those employed in the various departments from being servants of the Ministers in whose offices they served, to being servants of the Crown.³

Besides the changes brought about by legislation, the recommendation of the Commissioners led to considerable departmental reorganization, undertaken sometimes at the instigation of the

¹ MUSTOE, N. E. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), chapter 11, section 2

² 56 Geo. III, c. 46

³ *The Westminster Review* (1876), vol. 105, pp. 464 ff.

Treasury, sometimes by the controlling officers. The machinery by which the changes came about varied, but their pattern was similar.

Although the Civil Service was built up consistently from 1780, it is possible to distinguish three phases in its growth. The first, which covers a period from 1780-1848, was dominated by the ideas brought forward by the various Commissioners who inquired into public offices towards the end of the eighteenth century. The "Public Officers," as contemporaries rather loosely described those employed in public offices,¹ became Civil Servants, paid and pensioned from monies voted by Parliament. New standards of financial integrity gained recognition, and successful efforts were made to put an end to the peculations which had been common in earlier times. Effective methods of audit protected the public from being defrauded by its servants. Attempts were made to increase efficiency by abolishing sinecures, and doing away with many ancient formalities which had outlived their purpose and hampered the prompt execution of public business. The second stretches from 1848 to 1890, and was dominated by the ideas propounded in the reports on public offices associated with the names of Sir Charles Trevelyan and Sir Stafford Northcote, and by the educational views of Lord Macaulay and Benjamin Jowett. The main concern in this period was to make the Service more efficient by improving the quality of its personnel. Appointment by open competitive examinations took the place of appointment by political favour or patronage. This paved the way for grading the Service on a basis of ability, and effecting reorganization based on the division of labour. The Civil Service Commission was created, and the principle of "promotion by merit" introduced. The third phase, which stretches to our own times, was a period of consolidation and co-ordination. Efforts were made to weld the Service into a consistent whole, and to break down the rigid departmentalism, with its narrowing traditions, which had hitherto prevailed. Treasury control was tightened, and the Establishments branch created. Whitley Councils were set up to facilitate negotiations over terms of employment between the State and its servants. Arbitration was also introduced.

These divisions are not rigid. What was gained in one phase had to be consolidated in those which followed. The evolution of the Civil Service was gradual and these divisions are somewhat arbitrary and adopted only as a rough guide.

¹ Blackstone described an office as "a right to exercise a public or private employment, and to take the fees and emoluments thereunto belonging," but offered no definition of the public officer.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC OFFICES AND PUBLIC OFFICERS AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the organization of public business had fallen into somewhat disorderly conditions. The shortcomings of existing arrangements began to attract attention as the cost of the wars with America made itself felt. Expenditure rose steeply, but no one knew exactly upon what the money had been spent. Burke summed up the situation in 1780 when he declared in the House of Commons, in his famous speech on economical reform, that "neither the present, nor any other first lord of the Treasury, has ever been able to make a survey, or make even a tolerable guess of the expences of government of any one year, so as to enable him with the least degree of certainty, or even probability, to bring his affairs into compass."¹

In response to the disquiet which Burke voiced, Commissioners were appointed to inquire into public accounts,² and shortly after their reports had been received a further Commission examined conditions in public offices.³ These reports were followed up in 1797 by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which covered much the same ground but in a less thorough manner.⁴

These reports, taken together, give a picture of the ways in which

¹ *Parliamentary History* (1780), vol. 21, p. 29

² 20 Geo. III, c. 54 "For appointing and enabling Commissioners to examine, take and state the public Accounts of the Kingdom, and to report what Balances are in the Hands of Accountants which may be applied to the public Service, and what Defects there are in the Mode of receiving, collecting, issuing and accounting for public Money, and in what more expeditious and effectual and less expensive Manner the said Services can in future be regulated and carried on for the Benefit of the Public" The Commissioners made fifteen reports which were published in three volumes

³ 25 Geo. III, c. 19 "For appointing Commissioners to inquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites, and Emoluments which are or lately have been received in the several Public Offices to be therein mentioned, to examine into any Abuses which may exist in the same, and to report such Observations as shall occur to them for the better concluding and managing the Business transacted in the said Offices" Published without the evidence and appendices, *PP*, 1792-93, x. Re-issued complete with evidence and appendices, *PP*, 1806, vii.

⁴ The Select Committee on Finance made thirty-six reports. These, together with the proceedings thereon, are contained in *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, volumes xii and xiii.

public offices conducted their business, of the conditions of work, and of the rates of pay of those employed. They describe the material which had to be adapted to the making of a Civil Service.

Although the activities of Government were far more restricted towards the end of the eighteenth century than they were to be even fifty years later, there existed a great number of separate departments. It was estimated that in 1797 there were 16,267 public officers employed in seventy-five offices at a cost in salaries of £1,374,561 3s. 1d a year.¹

The activities covered by these offices can be summarized briefly. There were at this period two Secretaryships of State. The Home Department dealt with home affairs and affairs relating to Ireland. Subordinate to it was an office for Colonial affairs. The Foreign Department dealt with matters relating to the European States and to the United States of America.² There was the Treasury, whose business it was to consider all matters relating to revenue and "to give directions for the conduct of all Boards and persons entrusted with the receipt, management, or expenditure of the said revenues, to sign all warrants for the necessary payments thereout and generally to superintend every branch of revenue."³ The Naval and Military Departments were subdivided into a number of different offices. There were numerous Exchequer Offices concerned with accounting. There were many small revenue collecting offices, some of which did not work a full week.⁴ There were as yet no departments in charge

¹ *Accounts and Papers*, P.P., 1828, xvi, p. 531. These figures include the Irish offices. Taking the figures for the United Kingdom alone, there were fifty-three offices with a staff of 15,884, whose salaries amounted to £1,315,442 5s. 2d. a year. A footnote indicates that these figures are not altogether accurate, since the Custom House returns for the Port of London were destroyed by fire in 1814. For a list of the offices in the United Kingdom in 1797 see post, appendix to this chapter, p. 34.

² *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, 1st Report, P.P., 1806, vii, p. 4. The offices had been reorganized in 1782. They were of ancient origin and derived from the King's Secretaryship. From 1688 to 1782 there were two main Secretaryships, one for the Northern Department, one for the Southern. The Northern Department dealt with affairs relating to the northern Powers of Europe, the Southern Department with Southern Europe, and with Irish and Colonial affairs. From time to time there existed temporary Secretaries for Scotland and the Colonies. In 1782 the Southern Department became the Home Office, retaining Irish and Colonial affairs, and the Northern Department became the Foreign Office. The Colonial Secretaryship was abolished. A Secretary of State for War was appointed in 1794. See for full details ANSON, SIR WILLIAM R. *The Law and Custom of the Constitution*, 3rd edition (1907), vol. II, chapter III, section III, pp. 157 ff.

³ *Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, p. 51.

⁴ *2nd Report from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. I, p. 23.

of social services. There was no Board of Health, no Education Department, no Local Government Board.

Not all officers were necessarily fully employed. The estimates no doubt include those who held posts without personally fulfilling the duties attached to them.¹ Yet despite the need for cautious interpretation, the figures give some idea of the size and scope of administrative activities.

Besides the number and size of public offices, we have to consider how they were staffed, how the business was executed, and what means existed for keeping check on accounts, and protecting the public purse.

How Public Officers Were Recruited

There were several methods of appointment. Highly placed officials such as Commissioners of the various revenue collecting Boards, the chief officers of the Exchequer, the Commissioners of the various Boards subordinate to the Admiralty, and similar officials held their posts by Letters Patent.²

Clerks and other subordinate officers were appointed either by political heads of departments or by those in charge of sub-departments. This form of appointment is known as patronage. There were no defined rulings in these matters. Not all subordinates in a given department received their appointments from the same hands. Thus, although all the revenue collecting offices were subordinate to the Treasury, some of their officers were appointed directly by the Lords of the Treasury, others by the Boards of Commissioners in control of the particular offices, others by certain subordinate officers. The Treasury supervised appointments to the Customs service, and established officers were admitted by instruments or documents originating from the Treasury. Sometimes the

¹ In 1797 there were still one hundred and fifty "sinecure" offices in the Customs, and lesser quantities in other departments. See *4th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xi, p. 58.

² Letters Patent are an open document to which the Great Seal is affixed. Such a document is used for various purposes to put in commission certain powers inherent in the Crown, to confer certain offices, etc. See ANSON, W. R. *The Law and Custom of the Constitution* (third edition, 1907), vol. II, 18-19. Certain offices are still granted in this way. These include the Commissioners of the Treasury, of the Admiralty, of the Inland Revenue and of the Customs, the Comptroller and Auditor-General, the Assistant Comptroller and Auditor-General, the Clerk of the Parliaments, the Clerk of the House of Commons and the Registrar-General. *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service*, 1st Report, Appendix 4b, P P, 1912-13, xv, p. 253.

Commissioners of the Board of Customs recommended persons of their own choosing, and frequently the Lords of the Treasury signified whom they wished to be presented, for they tried to get an increasing number of appointments into their own hands.¹ In certain offices the situation was even more complex. At the Stamp Office, the Secretary and the Comptroller, who held their offices by Letters Patent, appointed their own clerks, but the warehouse-keeper and forty-six stampers were all appointed by the Treasury.²

In certain departments sale of office was common. It seems to have been particularly prevalent in the naval departments.³ Sir Charles Middleton, Comptroller of the Navy, estimated in 1786 that he received on an average 300 guineas annually from premiums on the appointments of clerks. He said that the receipt of these premiums "has been a very old-established practice in the Navy Office, so as to be considered as constituting part of their official income."⁴ This method of appointment was sanctioned by custom, and was not considered an abuse at the time.

Premiums varied considerably in their value. In the dockyards the Master Attendant and the Master Shipwright were accustomed to receiving £300 for clerkships, and the Clerk of Cheque £200.⁵ Storekeepers also sold places, although an Admiralty order of May 1773⁶ had forbidden them to do so. The places for which these premiums were paid often brought their holders incomes which did not exceed £50 a year, and frequently the chances of promotion were poor.⁷

Neither the principal officers nor their subordinates necessarily executed their duties in person. Highly placed Patent Office holders more often than not appointed and paid deputies, and undertook no part of the responsibilities of their office in person. Thus the Pay-

¹ HOON, ELIZABETH E. *The Organization of the English Customs System, 1696-1786* (1938), p. 50 and pp. 196 ff., where there is an admirable detailed description of how the patronage system worked in the Customs.

² *Reports from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, 6th Report, Appendix C, p. 159. Many other examples might be cited. Thus at the Salt Office the Commissioners retained the right to make 449 appointments, but usually made them upon Treasury recommendation. *Ibid.*, 8th Report, p. 227.

³ Places were sold in the office of the Commissioners of the Navy, in the Dockyards, and in the Victualling Office. *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, 5th Report, pp. 184, 191, 193 and 196, 6th Report, pp. 282-284, 8th Report, p. 575.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5th Report, Appendix I, p. 191.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6th Report, pp. 282, 283, 284. There is a list of the offices purchased in the Victualling Office with the prices in Appendix K to the 32nd Report of the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 553.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6th Report, p. 284.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4th Report, p. 137.

master did the work of the Treasurer of the Navy, receiving from him a salary of £500 a year.¹ Similarly the Paymaster-General of the Forces appointed a Deputy Paymaster at an annual salary of £1,000.² In 1780 it was found that neither of the Auditors of Imprest had intervened in the work of the office for over thirty years.³ Not all the Patent Office holders appointed their own deputies. In the Customs it had become usual for them to be appointed by the Lords of the Treasury.⁴

It was by no means only patentees who employed deputies. Clerkships in the Exchequer were so executed,⁵ whilst in the office of the Secretary of State, the "necessary woman" or office cleaner employed another to carry out her duties.⁶

Clerks in regular full-time jobs sometimes exercised minor deputyships or held posts the duties of which they employed others to execute. Both these practices may be illustrated by a single example. In recognition of his services to the Secretary of State, Charles Brietzke, First Clerk in the Home Office, had been granted the post of engrossing clerk in the Office of Alienations. The salary was £81 13s. a year: he employed a deputy to do the work. On the other hand he himself deputized for a certain William Fraser in the Signet Office: he received £227 3s. a year for the work and held the post at the pleasure of the principal.⁷

It is clear from the appendices to the reports of the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuties that tenure of office, though described as "during pleasure," had become permanent, subject to good behaviour. The length of service of the clerks in the departments examined are listed in the appendices to the reports. Many had served for thirty-seven years, and there was one Treasury clerk who had been superannuated after sixty years' service. So long a term, however, was exceptional.

The position at the time this survey opens may be briefly summarized. Appointments were obtained by Letters Patent, by patronage, or by purchase. Those appointed retained their positions during good behaviour. They did not necessarily execute the duties of their office in person.

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 1, 6th Report, pp. 78-79.

² *Ibid.*, Appendix 23, p. 330.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 11, 12th Report, p. 185.

⁴ HOON, ELIZABETH E., *The Organization of the English Customs System, 1696-1786* (1938), pp. 200-201.

⁵ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 1, 6th Report, p. 108.

⁶ *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuties*, P.P., 1806, vii, 1st Report, Appendix 14, p. 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, Appendix 3, p. 21.

How Public Officers Were Paid

The emoluments of public officers were derived from a great variety of sources. A salary, by which is meant a fixed sum of money paid at regular intervals in return for the performance of specific duties, formed as a rule a part, but often only a very small part, of an officer's total receipts.¹ Money derived from fees often far exceeded that derived from salaries. Fees at this period played an important part in the finance of public offices. They were collected either from members of the public, for whom some service had been performed, as for instance those collected by the Secretaries of the Admiralty for granting commissions, or by one department from another, such as those taken at the Treasury on the yearly declaration of accounts by other departments. The rates and occasions for fee-taking were fixed by custom. The total produce of the fees depended on the frequency with which these occasions arose, and therefore was variable. Fees were not funded for each office, but were distributed according to custom to particular officers. In some offices the principals were the chief beneficiaries. In 1783 the two sinecure Auditors of Imprest drew, the one £16,565, the other £10,331 in fees—it was an exceptionally fruitful year. Out of these sums they paid their office expenses, which came to well under half these amounts.²

The produce of fees mounted steeply in some offices in times of war. In peace-time the total emoluments of the Cashier and the Accountant in the office of the Paymaster-General of the Forces amounted to between £1,000 and £1,500 and between £500 and £600 respectively. In 1779, as a result of the war with America, they were £7,175 19s. 9d. and £1,501 7s. 9d.³ War doubled the takings of the Auditor of Receipt for the Exchequer and trebled

¹ Monies from which salaries were derived were sometimes an office's total receipts, sometimes there were special sources. Thus nine of the Treasury clerks were paid from the Customs revenue. Part of the expenses of the Treasury and of the offices of the Secretaries of State were met from the Civil List. Analyses of the composition of the emoluments of clerks and other employees in the offices of the Paymaster-General, Treasurer of the Navy, and the Exchequer appear in *6th Report from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. i, pp. 330 ff. For similar accounts for the offices of the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, Admiralty, Commissioners of the Navy, Plymouth Dockyard, other yards, Sick and Hurt Office, Victualling Office, see *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, pp. 38-39, 40-41, 82-83, 126-127, 476-479, 480-481, 534-535, 708-709. Similar tables appear later in the *Reports from the Select Committee on Finance*, 1797.

² *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 12th Report, vol. ii, p. 186 Appendices Nos. 37 and 38. ³ *Ibid.*, 6th Report, Appendix 23, vol. i, p. 330

those of his first clerk.¹ In some offices almost every clerk enjoyed some portion of the fees, in others many had no share in them at all.

Fees and salaries were the main sources of emoluments: there were, however, supplementary resources. In some offices certain clerks had the right of franking newspapers, or received compensation for loss of the right. Franking was the right of sending letters and packets free of charge, by initialing the corner of the envelope. This right had been claimed by members of the House of Commons in 1660. It is not clear how it had come to be acquired by clerks in certain public offices. Whatever its origin it provided a welcome supplement to other sources of income. Some clerks in the offices of the Secretaries of State received small sums annually from the Irish Concordatum Fund,² some received New Year gifts. Perquisites such as coals, candles, houses or apartments were attached to certain offices.³ A single illustration will show how one clerk's income might be composed. The first senior clerk in the office of the Secretary of State for Home Affairs estimated that the total emoluments from his office amounted to £553 10s 10d compounded as follows: salary, £175, from the East India Company's customary New Year gifts, £5 5s; from the Post Office Revenue, £280, from franking newspapers, £73 5s. 10d.

There was no consistency between the scales of remuneration received in similar offices. Thus clerks in the office of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs received from £80 to £1,025,⁴ those in the office of the Secretary of State for Home Affairs from £70 to £850;⁵ those at the Treasury from £100 to £889.⁶

In some offices clerks had exceptional opportunities for making extra money. In the offices of the Secretaries of State those in certain positions were looked upon as having the right to act as agents for Consuls and Ministers abroad, transacting business for them on com-

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 1, Appendix 35, p. 360.

² The Irish Concordatum Fund or Irish letter money. Before the establishment of the Civil List in Ireland in 1794 a sum of £600 was issued from the Fund by warrant of the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council, and remitted to London. *23rd Report on Finance*, 1797, Appendix M3, p. 89 (vol. xii).

³ The First Commissioner of the Stamp Office was allowed rooms, coals and candles. See *6th Report from the Select Committee on Finance*, 1797, *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 159. Similar privileges were common in the offices subordinate to the Commissioners of the Navy. See *passim* in appendices to *5th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, Appendix, pp. 40-41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, Appendix, pp. 38-39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3rd Report, Appendix, pp. 182-183.

mission.¹ In the Navy Office agencies were known to bring clerks in as much as £500 or £600 a year.²

Whilst he was working, a public officer derived his income from a variety of sources. What happened when he retired? There were instances of those who had retired receiving some pension allowance, although in most offices there were no special sums set apart for this purpose. The Customs and Excise Departments afford notable exceptions. In the Customs there had been many funds set apart for various classes of officers. These funds were consolidated in 1776, they were derived from a poundage on salaries. The usual allowance paid to a retired officer amounted to a third of his salary.³ Arrangements in the Excise were somewhat similar.⁴ In other departments certain officers who were no longer able to work were granted pensions, but these pensions were neither paid nor entered as such at the Exchequer, but were included with the other expenses of the office. The payments might be authorized in a number of ways. For instance the Secretaries of State sanctioned the payment of pensions to a number of retired messengers, but in the same offices there were other pensions which had been authorized by Order in Council.⁵ In the Victualling Office certain employees were superannuated on half of their salaries, and there existed in that department regulations which permitted small allowances, not exceeding £10 a year, to be made to not more than twenty labourers and ten coopers who had been in the service for twenty years or more.⁶ At the Treasury clerks' and messengers' superannuations amounted in 1797 to £719.⁷ These instances do not amount to a system, for there was no system. Outside the Customs and Excise, there does not seem to have been any class of public servant which was regarded as having a right to a pension.

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P P, 1806, vii, 1st Report, p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, 5th Report, p. 187.

³ HOON, ELIZABETH E. *The Organization of the English Customs System, 1696-1786* (1938), pp. 236-237.

⁴ The "Excise Charity Fund" was created by a Treasury Minute dated 1689. See *Royal Commission on Civil Superannuation*, P P, 1851 (Session 2), xxiv, Appendix xii, p. 156.

⁵ *3rd Report from the Select Committee on Public Expenditure*, P P, 1808, iii, p. 269. See also Appendices 11, 14 and 15 on pp. 308, 311 and 312.

⁶ *32nd Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xiii, p. 553.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 15th Report, vol. xii, p. 287. Cf. arrangements for the superannuation of three clerks described in the *2nd Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P P, 1806, vii, p. 53. One of them had not received his full allowance as there had been a deficiency in the fee fund from which it was derived.

Where there was no pension there were other means of providing for old age and retirement. Sometimes a sinecure office served this purpose,¹ sometimes a man filled an office on the condition that he paid part of the annual salary or emoluments to his predecessor.² Practice varied from office to office; men took advantage of whatever opportunities offered for making provision for their future needs.

The Organization of Public Offices

Public offices, at this period, were organized independently, it is not easy to find conditions common to all of them. There were, as we have seen, no common salary scales, no commonly adopted device for providing for retired officers. Methods of organization differed also. There were offices in which clerks were distinguished by rank, divided into senior and junior, and the work so distributed that the senior clerks became responsible for certain branches of business. In other offices no such conditions prevailed. The daily hours of labour were usually, but not universally, six;³ some offices opened at ten o'clock, others at eleven. The length of the annual holidays also varied, ranging from 45 to 56 days in the year.⁴ Thus although there were a great number of offices carrying on the public business, there was no public service—that is to say, there was no co-ordination of the separate and independent departments.

Checks and Controls

The majority of the public offices were concerned with collecting or spending the public revenue, activities which demand careful check and control. The machinery which existed at this period was faulty and inadequate. The Board of Treasury had at no time exercised a systematic control over public accounts; that duty belonged to the Auditors of Imprest, who were regarded as officers of

¹ *1st Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities, P.P.*, 1806, vii, p. 12.

² For instance, at the Admiralty the Agent of Marines, described as "a most competent gentleman," had in 1786 held his post for twenty years at a salary of £400 a year out of which he paid his predecessor annually £200. *Ibid.*, 3rd Report, p. 105.

³ The clerks in the Salt Office worked only five hours. *9th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, Appendices, pp. 255 ff.

⁴ The Salt Office had 49 days, the Office of the Receipt of the Exchequer 56, the Stamp Office 52, the Customs 45. See *ibid.*, 9th Report, p. 244, 22nd Report, Appendix E, p. 472, 6th Report, p. 156, and HOON, ELIZABETH E., *op. cit.*, p. 222.

the Exchequer.¹ The offices of Auditors of Imprest were created in the second year of Elizabeth. The Auditors were authorized by their Letters Patent to examine and audit certain specified accounts, as well as the accounts of persons receiving money from the Exchequer by way of imprest and upon account. There were two Auditors each had an independent office and staff. In the course of the centuries these responsible offices had degenerated into lucrative sinecures, filled by persons of high rank, who enjoyed the fees, but executed the duties by deputy. The duties performed at the two offices were similar: the Lords of the Treasury could direct an accountant to present his accounts at either. The Auditors had no power to call accountants to them, the writ calling for the accounts emanated from the Exchequer.

The process of audit amounted to little more than checking the accountants' arithmetic. Material such as vouchers and receipts, by which the validity of the figures could be tested, was not as a rule supplied. None the less the process was exquisitely intricate. It was well described by the Commissioners on Public Accounts. "The Imprest Roll," they reported, "is all written in an Abridgement of the Latin language. The Sums are both expressed in Characters that are, in general, Corruptions of the old Text, and are in use no where that we can find, but in the Exchequer, Characters are very liable to Mistakes, inconvenient and troublesome even to the officers themselves: the Sums so expressed cannot be cast up. Most of the Accounts in the Exchequer are made up Twice, first in common Figures, that they may be added together; and then turned into *Latin*, and the same entered into Exchequer Figures. And that the high Numbers in a declared Account may be understood, they are written in common Figures under the Characters."² The Act 4 Geo I, c. 26, which had introduced simplifications and the use of the English language into public business, had excluded the Exchequer.

As a result of this system a hopeless confusion prevailed in the accounts both of those who spent and those who collected the public revenue. Perhaps the most important public accountants were the Treasurer of the Navy and the Paymaster-General of the Forces, who drew from the Exchequer the monies which had been voted by Parliament for naval and military purposes. They drew the money

¹ For a short and clear historical summary of the office and functions of the Auditors, see Part 2 of the *5th Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure*, P.P., 1810, 11, p. 382.

² *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 11, p. 37.

under separate heads. it was the duty of the Exchequer to see that the total sums voted for the years were not exceeded. It was nobody's duty to see that the services were adequate to the requisitions, nor, until these officers died or resigned, was cognizance taken of the total balances in their hands. The Auditors of Imprest were responsible for auditing the accounts of both officers, but the process seemed to do little to allay confusion. The accounts of succeeding office-holders were kept separate; nevertheless it was customary that the auditors should not deal with the account of one officer until those of his predecessor were closed. As a result when, for example, a number of accounts of past Treasurers of the Navy remained open, the clerks in the Treasurer's Office had to keep separate accounts. For this service they received fees either from the past Treasurers or from their heirs or representatives. The balances due to the Exchequer were not paid in until the final adjustment of accounts had been made with the Auditors of Imprest. As a result of this system accounts remained unsettled for astonishingly long periods, to the detriment of the public purse. It was estimated in 1780 that the heirs of Viscount Falkland, who as Treasurer of the Navy had tendered his last account in 1689, were liable for a deficit of £27,611. This sum was looked upon as a bad debt; there was still, however, £76,793 due from the representatives of subsequent Treasurers.¹ The accounts of the Paymasters-General were no better. Lord Holland's average balance from the time of his resignation in 1764 until 1778, when his representatives paid £200,000 into the Exchequer, was £445,735. There were considerable deficits also on past accounts.²

The punctual collection of the revenue appears to have presented considerable difficulties. At this period officers known as Receivers-General were responsible for collecting the land tax, and the taxes on houses, windows, and servants and for making proper returns. Under the various Acts, the produce of these taxes was supposed to be paid in to the Exchequer twenty or forty days from the date of collection. The responsible office was the Tax Office; but it exercised only a slight control over the collectors. Since 1778 quarterly returns had been required. In 1780 it was found that arrears amounting to the considerable sum of £398,748³ had accumulated in the Receivers' hands. The public had to bear the expense of heavy legal charges disbursed in attempts to recover outstanding balances. The Receivers-

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 3rd Report, vol. 1, p. 28.

² *Ibid.*, 5th Report, pp. 66-67. Lord Lincoln had failed to account for £473,127. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, p. 10.

General excused themselves for their unpunctual payments on the grounds of the difficulties they met in distant counties of procuring remittances to London. They were not salaried officers, but received a commission of 2d. in the £1 on their collection. Out of this they paid their expenses, which included fees on appointment, on entering into recognizances, on every payment into the Exchequer, on stating and passing accounts, and on receiving the quietus. They estimated that this came yearly to about £90.¹ Since they felt that what was over recompensed them inadequately for their trouble they had been in the habit of retaining considerable amounts of their collections in their own hands for the purpose of their own advantage—an ambiguous phrase upon which they did not enlarge.²

The collection of Excise duties was far more efficiently executed. Each collector made his rounds eight times a year, remitting the net collection to the central office. He kept no balances in hand, and in 1780 there were no deficits. The collectors were appointed by the Commissioners of Excise from amongst the surveyors, after an examination of character and conduct. They did not work on commission, but were salaried, receiving £120 a year which, like all salaries at the time, was subject to deductions of 1s. 6d. in the £.³ They received in addition perquisites amounting to perhaps £100 a year.⁴ It looked, therefore, as though lack of adequate checks and controls led to erratic collection and accounting for the revenue.

Survey

Thus briefly, at the time the inquiries took place at the end of the eighteenth century, each public office carried on its business in its own way, using whatever methods of organization its traditions or its necessities dictated and the public tolerated. There was no co-ordination, there was no effective machinery for protecting the public purse; the method of audit instituted in the days of Elizabeth no longer provided an adequate check. There was no supervision of

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 1st Report, Appendix 4, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ The proceeds of these deductions were appropriated to a payment of part of the interest on the National Debt. The duty of 6d. in the £ on salaries was first imposed by 7 Geo. I, c. 27, that of 1s. by 31 Geo. II, c. 22. *8th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, pp. 589-590.

⁴ *1st Report from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 1, p. 11. The produce of the Excise collection at this period (1780) was estimated at £3,714,771, excluding that paid in London without the intervention of collectors. In England and Wales there were fifty-three collectors, each gave a security of £5,000.

public offices, and therefore no means of ensuring that the public business was performed at as low a cost as possible. Positions which had at one time been important and responsible had degenerated into sinecures; those who filled them drew the profits of office, and employed others to do the work. The Lords of the Treasury were acquiring the patronage of an increasing number of posts, this patronage gave them political power. They exercised no authority over the organization of other departments. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that at this time public business was carried on in a number of more or less independent offices, which were subject to no supervision either as regards their methods of work or the details of their expenditure. In the light of these facts it is not surprising that the First Lord of the Treasury could not make a tolerable guess at the expenses of government for any one year.

APPENDIX

A List of Public Offices in the United Kingdom in 1797, with the Number of Persons Employed in each. Taken from the *Return of the Number of Persons Employed and of the Pay or Salaries granted to such Persons in all Public Offices or Departments in the years 1797, 1805, 1825, etc.* (P.P., 1828, xvi.)

	No. of Persons Employed
1 The Treasury	142
2 Secretary of State for the Home Department . . .	26
3 Secretary of State for the Foreign Department . . .	24
4 Secretary of State for the Colonial Department . . .	12
5. Pay Council Office	16
6. Pay Council Office for Trade	19
7 Admiralty	45
8. Navy Office	160
9 Navy Pay Office	73
10 Royal Marine Office	—
11 Victualling Office	118
12 Audit Office	33
13 Colonial Audit Office	—
14 Ordnance Office	353
15 Customs, United Kingdom	6,004
16. Excise, United Kingdom	6,580
17. Stamp Office, United Kingdom	521
18. Taxes Office	201

	<i>No. of Persons Employed</i>
19 Post Office	957
20 Mint Office	33
21. War Office	58
22. Pay Office	24
23 Commander-in-Chief's Office	16
24 Quartermaster-General's Office	—
25 Adjutant-General's Office	—
26. Judge Advocate-General's Office	2
27 Office for Military Boards	—
28 Army Medical Board Office	6
29. Chaplain-General's Office	2
30. Secretary's Office, Chelsea Hospital	4
31 Agent's Office, Chelsea Hospital	—
32 Deputy Treasurer's Office, Chelsea Hospital	1
33 Alien Office	2
34 Stationery Office	17
35 Registrar of Colonial Slaves Office	—
36 State Paper Office	6
37 Comptroller of Army Accounts Office	13
38 National Debt Office	7
39 Lottery Office	115
40 Hackney Coach, Hawkers' and Pedlars' Office	42
41 Auditor of the Exchequer's Office	26
42 Teller of the Exchequer	—
43. Teller of the Exchequer	6
44. Teller of the Exchequer	—
45 Teller of the Exchequer	6
46 Pells Office, Exchequer	23
47 Exchequer Bill Office	8
48 Woods Office and Land Revenue	—
49 Auditor of Land Revenue	—
50 Civil Establishment, Isle of Man	41
51 Alienation Office	8
52 Hawkers and Pedlars, Scotland, Office	—
53. Barons Exchequer, Scotland	39

CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM OF THE CONDITION OF PUBLIC OFFICES

The Commissioners who inquired into public offices between 1780 and 1790 were required not only to investigate, but also to recommend such improvements as they considered desirable. They found much to criticize, and made suggestions for radical alterations in the conduct of public business. Rising expenditure had led to their appointment, and they devoted considerable attention to the question of what measures should be taken to protect the public purse. Existing systems of accounting were unsatisfactory, existing checks were inadequate.

That large balances of public money should be allowed to accumulate in the hands of successive Treasurers of the Navy and Paymasters General of the Forces, was clearly undesirable. To prevent this, far-reaching changes were necessary. The holders of these offices had, in the past, deposited the monies they had drawn from the Exchequer with their private bankers. Their accounts and other papers had been looked upon as their private property: they were not deposited in the office, and successive Paymasters had been in the habit of taking these papers with them when they retired.¹ The Commissioners proposed that for the future the "subordinate treasuries," as they were then described, should be transformed into offices of account, that the balances should be kept at the Bank of England, and that there should be frequent declaration of the total balances in hand to the Lords of the Treasury.² They pointed out that the Paymaster General was "an Officer appointed to a Public Trust, his Office created for the Use of, and supported by, the Public, and his Books contain Accounts of the Receipt and Expenditure of Public Money, and we are of Opinion, that all these Official Books and Papers are, and should be considered as the Property of the Public, and as such, left and deposited in the Pay Office, for the Use and Information of Posterity."³ The independent treasuries should, that

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners of Public Accounts*, vol. 1, 5th Report, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, 3rd Report, p. 38, 5th Report, p. 71, 4th Report, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, 5th Report, p. 71.

is to say, become public offices. They suggested that the accounts of successive Treasurers and Paymasters should no longer be kept separate, and that each should hand over his balance to his successor.

These reforms were not sufficient of themselves to prevent the accumulation of deficits. The deficits and the frauds which had been discovered indicated the inadequacy of existing checks and controls. Nor were these practices confined to the offices examined. Nelson wrote again and again to the responsible departments complaining of the frauds perpetrated by those who contracted to victual the Navy in the West Indies. He examined a number of books and papers "from which," he said, "it appears that the government has been defrauded in a most scandalous and infamous manner. The only emulation I can perceive is, Who could cheat the most."¹

The Commissioners advised radical alterations in the existing methods of audit. They pointed out that it was not enough to check accountants' arithmetic, but that it was the duty of responsible officers to check the validity of the documents submitted to them.² The customary Exchequer forms added needless complication and obscurity to the accounts. "It does not seem reasonable," the Commissioners commented, "that this should be the only Court whose Proceedings are to remain in Mystery and Obscurity." They went on to lay down the general principles which should govern account keeping: "Simplicity, Uniformity, and Perspicuity, are Qualities of Excellence in every Account, both Public and Private, and Accounts of Public Money, as they concern all, should be intelligible to all."³ They therefore recommended the use of the English language and of common figures, and suggested that the learning which had gone to the exercise of the older methods would be preserved by antiquarians and keepers of records. Nor did they hesitate to condemn the practices of the Auditors of Imprest. "In the Progress of our Inquiry into the manner in which Public Accounts are audited in this Office," they reported, "we have not been able to discover, from those which have hitherto come to our Consideration, any solid Advantage derived to the Public from the Examination given to

¹ Letter from Nelson to the Secretary of the Treasury, dated Boreas, Nevis, May 4, 1787. CLARKE, J. S., and M'ARTHUR, JOHN. *The Life and Services of Horatio Nelson*, vol. 1, p. 96.

² "We must add that it is the indispensable duty of the respective Officers, to estimate the degree of faith and confidence which is due to those documents respectively, when the accounts to which they relate, or the vouchers themselves bear a suspicious appearance." *8th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuites*, P. P., 1806, vii, p. 569.

³ *8th Report from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 11, p. 38.

them by the Auditor of Imprest, and, for that Reason, we have suggested the Propriety of exempting them from his Jurisdiction, and the urgent Necessity of relieving the Nation from so heavy, and, to all Appearance, so unnecessary an Expenditure."¹

Sinecures *

These proposals had far-reaching implications. As has already been pointed out, the Auditorships were highly lucrative sinecure offices; the profits were derived from the fees paid upon the examination of accounts, to exempt accounts from this examination entailed, therefore, the withdrawal of the profits of the offices. The suggestion raised the whole question of sinecures, and in consequence affected many departments.

Sinecures were of various kinds. There were offices which enjoyed revenue without employment, such as that of the Customs Officers called Inspectors and Examiners of Exchequer Books in the Outports, or the Secretary of the Latin Language in the office of the Secretary of State. There was a large class of offices where the duties were entirely executed by deputy, like the Treasurer of the Navy, the Paymaster General of the Forces, and the Auditor of Receipt of the Exchequer. What was to happen to these offices? Were sinecures of the nature of property? The Commissioners considered these questions in some detail. They argued that sinecures should be abolished. "We do not mean," they said, "to violate, in the slightest Degree, any Right vested in an officer by virtue of his Office. The Principles which secure the Rights of private Property are sacred, to be preserved inviolate, they are Land Marks to be considered as immoveable. But the Public have their Rights also, Rights equally sacred, and as freely to be exercised. . . If a useless and expensive Office cannot be suppressed, nor the Redundancies of an Office curtailed, be the Necessities of the State ever so urgent, without intrenching upon the Right of the Possessor, and violating Public Faith, the Evil must be endured, until the Power of the Legislature can, without the Imputation of Injustice, be exerted for the Relief of the State." Yet the acceptance of a public office implied the engagement to do business, and a right to compensation, and reward for labour. The officer "has no Right to any specific Quantity of Business, that Quantity must fluctuate according to Circumstance, or may be regulated by the Convenience of the State. If the Good of the Community requires a Diminution or Annihilation of the

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 12th Report, vol. II, p. 184.

Business of his Office, or the transferring it elsewhere, the Officer cannot oppose to the Regulation, the Diminution or Annihilation of his Profits, because not the emolument of the Officer, but the Advantage of the Public, is the Object of the Institution. To suppose in him a Right to make such an Objection, would be to suppose the Office created for his Benefit, that is to suppose it to originate in a Violation of public Trust, an Abuse of Power, and an Offence against the State."¹ Upon these grounds they recommend the abolition of sinecure offices. They put forward a fourfold principle "First, No Office should be holden by Legal Tenure; Secondly, Every Office should have a useful Duty annexed to it, Thirdly, Every Officer should execute, himself, the Duty of his Office, Fourthly, Offices where the Duty was of the same Kind should be consolidated."² These principles were enunciated in relation to the Customs their application, however, was general. Wherever the Commissioners met sinecures, whether lucrative ones which were political gifts, or minor ones,³ they recommended abolition.

Emoluments and Pensions

The Commissioners discussed in some detail their views on how employees in public offices should be paid. They raised no objections to the existence of fees,⁴ but questioned the method of their distribution.

In an office such as that of the Auditors of Imprest the system encouraged abuse. For until the completion of the examination of an account, the balance, however great, remained, if in favour of the public, with the accountant, if in favour of the accountant with the public. It might therefore be to the interest of the accountant to purchase at a high price either delay or expedition in the passing of his accounts. The permission to receive fees and gratuities provided a corrupt officer with the obvious method of making money.⁵ Similar dangers arose in the dockyards.⁶

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 11th Report, vol 11, pp 133-134

² *Ibid*, 14th Report, vol 111, p 97

³ The Commissioners expressed themselves even more strongly over certain minor sinecures. In the office of the Tellers of the Exchequer there were four officers called "second clerks" who had no duties and drew between them £5,518 in fees. "Whatever Presumptions," said the Commissioners, "a superior Officer may have to an Exemption from Duty and Service, a Sinecure is repugnant to the Idea of the Condition of a Clerk in Office." *Ibid*, 6th Report, vol 1, p 108

⁴ The Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities said in their first report that fees, although heavy, were not complained of. *P P*, 1806, vii, p 10

⁵ *Reports from the Commissioner on Public Accounts*, 12th Report, vol 11, pp 184-185

⁶ *6th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, *P P*, 1806, vii, 306.

Even where the fee-taking was not open to direct abuse, the customary methods of distribution had the disadvantage of providing an emolument which had no necessary relation to the services of the recipient. Neither condition was desirable. The Commissioners proposed sweeping changes: they suggested the substitution of salaries for the multifarious payments hitherto received.¹ They outlined in some detail the principles upon which payments should be made. "We have said," they reported, "that Salaries should be annexed to the Office; it ought to be a full and competent Recompense for the Execution, and no more, the Whole of it ought to be paid to the Person who executes, independent of the Officer who presides, but who should still retain the Power of Appointment, and the same Control, that he now exercises over the inferior Officer. Where the Profits exceed what the Officer is in Reason entitled to, the Overplus should be abolished, and the Public reap the Benefit, not a person who earns no Part of it."² Already some officers were paid by salary only, and there seemed no reason why the principle should not be extended.³ The Commissioners realized that it was unlikely that so radical a change would be accepted for all offices without further investigation, "and yet," they concluded, "the Advantage that it holds out to the Public, its Simplicity, and Aptitude to be accommodated to all Offices, however distinguished, afford great reason to believe it may be applied to every Department of Government."

Graduated salary scales were worked out in detail for each office examined.⁴ It was proposed that the fees in each office should be funded, and the salaries derived from the fund. It was proposed that the receipt of other monies, such as New Year gifts, should be forbidden to individuals: no officer should be allowed to accept agencies⁵ nor enjoy a financial interest in contracts for the supply of stores to the Government.⁶ On the other hand all payments should be net

¹ The proposal was first made in connection with the Exchequer Offices.

² *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 6th Report, vol. 1, p. 116.

³ The Treasurer of the Navy and the Paymaster General of the Forces were salaried officers. They had no perquisites other than what they gained from banking the monies they drew from the Exchequer with their private bankers. The Paymaster of Exchequer Bills was also salaried.

⁴ *Reports from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, pp. 14-15, 59, 103, 138-140, 184-187, 308-312, 584-587, 784-791. The scales in the two offices of the Secretaries of State were assimilated, the others were slightly lower.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, p. 16, 5th Report, p. 187.

⁶ A clause to this effect was inserted in the proposed "bonds" which they suggested should act as guarantees of probity. See below, p. 42.

payments, and the special taxes on salaries abolished, pending their abolition they should be paid from a general fund ¹

The Commissioners realized that if sinecures were abolished, salary scales introduced, the receipt by individuals of miscellaneous monies of various kinds forbidden, and the practice of an officer paying over a part of his emoluments to his predecessor discontinued,² all existing ways of providing for retirement would be done away with. They therefore regarded the introduction of a comprehensive superannuation scheme as a necessary appendage to their other proposals. They recommended that every officer who retired on account of age or infirmity should receive a pension amounting to not more than half the salary which he had been receiving during his last twelve months' service ³

Appointments

It will be remembered that the current methods of appointment were by Letters Patent, by purchase and by patronage. Despite the sanction of custom, the Commissioners condemned place-selling as "unbecoming, highly improper, prejudicial to the Public service."⁴ They considered the premiums "to be the source from whence corruption, as well in principle as in practice, originally springs, a bad example being thereby held out to inferior persons, who, it is feared, will seldom hesitate to sell that favour and indulgence to others, which they have purchased at a considerable expense for themselves."⁵ They therefore recommended that the practice should be stopped.

They raised no objections to appointment by patronage, and considered it fitting that the head of an office should choose his subordinates.⁶ They approved promotion by seniority in the lower ranks, but for the higher posts, such as the chief clerkships at the Treasury, they recommended that the most fit from amongst the senior clerks should be selected.⁷

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 8th Report, pp. 589-590.

² They described this practice as "an abuse which ought to be discontinued". See *ibid.*, p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, p. 14, 3rd Report, p. 104, 4th Report, p. 140, 5th Report, p. 188.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5th Report, p. 184.

⁵ 8th Report, p. 575.

⁶ The approval of appointment by patronage was implicit throughout the reports. They said in their discussion of salaries that the power of appointment should remain with the presiding officer. See *ante*, p. 40. Discussing appointments in the Navy Office, they said that it was fit that "Commissioners should continue to have the choice of their own instruments" and that they should have the power of nominating junior clerks in rotation, subject to the approval of the Board. *Ibid.*, 5th Report, p. 184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5th Report, p. 184, and 2nd Report, p. 56.

Miscellaneous Considerations

In addition to the general proposals affecting all public offices and employees, the Commissioners suggested numbers of individual reforms in the interests of economy, efficiency or probity. They indicated, for instance, that their investigations into the revenue collecting offices induced a "strong Presumption that so many Establishments are not necessary for the Management of these Branches of the Revenue and that consolidation of offices would be beneficial to the Public."¹ Where clerks were inefficient, as at the Sick and Hurt Office, they recommended their removal;² where they considered the organization of work unsatisfactory they suggested detailed improvements.³

They paid close attention to the question of safeguards. Those employed in certain public offices necessarily came across the most secret Government correspondence. Others were in positions of considerable financial trust: others were open to the temptation of receiving unauthorized monies of one kind or another. Yet there existed no oath of secrecy or fidelity, nor any other form of guarantee. "Much reliance may be placed in Officers chosen with propriety," the Commissioners commented, "but a trust of this importance required caution in the extreme, and ought to call in every fence and guard which the Constitution will admit."⁴ Therefore they proposed that in every office of financial trust only, such as that of the Treasurer of the Navy, officers should enter into a bond to the amount of thrice their annual salaries: that in offices such as those of the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, Admiralty, Dockyards and Navy Office, in addition to the bond, they should take an oath of secrecy and fidelity before one of the Courts of Record. It should, they said, be particularized in the bond that they undertook to receive no fee, gratuity nor perquisite for work executed in the office, other than their established salaries: that they would not act as agents, nor be interested in contracts for Government stores and provisions. The pro-

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 2nd Report, vol. 1, p. 23, Appendix 28, p. 200, shows that the gross produce of the taxes collected by the Stamp, Salt, Hawkers and Pedlars, and Hackney Coaches Offices was at the time of the inquiry £831,126, and that the charges of management amounted to £70,577.

² *8th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, p. 515.

³ *Ibid.*, 3rd Report, pp. 102-103. They recommended the classification of the Admiralty clerks into three grades, senior, junior, and extra. In their 8th Report they gave detailed proposals for a complete reorganization of the Victualling business.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1st Report, p. 10.

posed penalty for default was surrender of the bond, dismissal and inability to serve in any capacity in the Civil Service ¹

Survey

In the course of their twenty-seven reports, the two Commissions had made a very thorough survey of existing methods and organization of public business. They discovered ample reasons why the cost was heavy in relation to the volume of business. They found many offices and practices which had outlived the time of their usefulness, and which had not been adapted to the requirements of a changing society.

No doubt in earlier times, when public expenditure was lower, there had been advantages in having public business conducted in offices which were more or less independent of supervision, directed by the presiding officer as he thought fit, paying their expenses in the miscellaneous way described. Clearly the Commissioners felt that the time for such methods of organization were past. From their reports, so precise in detail, so careful in the explanation of principles, there emerges a lucid description of how they desired to see public business conducted.

Offices and methods were to be adapted to existing needs; superfluities were to be eliminated in the interests of public welfare and of economy. Thus they advised amalgamations, as for instance those which involved reducing the large number of tax-collecting offices each directed by well-paid Boards of Commissioners, and served by staffs which were not fully employed. Old-fashioned practices, such as the Exchequer methods of account keeping, were to be brought up to date.

Their views on personnel were equally explicit. Since every office was to have a useful duty annexed to it, and every officer to execute himself the duties of his office, all sinecures were to be abolished. They envisaged a subordinate staff, appointed by patronage, promoted by seniority and by merit, paid on graduated salary scales, and adequately pensioned when ill-health or old age made them unfit for further service.

An efficient and punctual audit system was to check financial transactions and accounts; private individuals were no longer to be permitted to use the public revenue for their own profit. The public was to be protected from unfaithful servants by safeguards of bonds and oaths of fidelity.

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, vol. 1, pp. 10, 57, 104, 141, 187, 313.

These recommendations involved revolutionary changes which encroached on the vested interests of powerful individuals, and overthrew practices long sanctioned by custom. They implied a fresh conception of the purposes of public offices and of the duties of public officers. The abolition of sinecure offices touched the existing political system nearly, for these had been political gifts, lucrative rewards for political services. Moreover a salaried, pensioned staff of permanent officials is the sure basis of a professional public service. Nor were the financial proposals less momentous. The transformation of the subordinate treasuries into offices of account, the insistence on adequate and punctual audit, involved tighter control over offices and officers.

The Commissioners were fully aware of the difficulties that were likely to be encountered in bringing about the changes they outlined. Already from time to time attempts had been made to regulate offices, "and if," they commented, "they were not extended further and to more essential points, it must be attributed to the difficulty attending innovations upon ancient forms and established practices, a task too troublesome and too invidious to invite attempts unsupported by the Legislature, and unsanctioned by public inquiry."¹ Yet they had accomplished their task of description, of discussion, of recommendation so thoroughly, that for decades their proposals dominated all schemes for administrative reform. In the process of time, covering nearly half a century, the public service was transformed on the lines which they had envisaged.

¹ *Reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts*, 1st Report, p. 16

CHAPTER IV

REFORMS OF PUBLIC OFFICES, 1780-1840

The first reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts aroused considerable discussion in Parliament. In 1782 the House of Commons passed eleven resolutions in Committee approving the recommendations so far made. The same year the first of a series of Acts was passed introducing important administrative reforms.¹ These Acts were of significance for the future of the public service, for they gave legal sanction to certain of the principles laid down by the Commissioners.

In the offices of the Paymaster General of the Forces and of the Treasurer of the Navy, fee-funding was introduced. In the former the requirement that a salary book should be kept, that copies should be deposited at the Treasury and at the Bank of England, and that there should be no alteration of salary rates without the authorization of the Lords of the Treasury, introduced a measure of supervision and control which had been lacking previously. A superannuation fund was established in the office of the Treasurer of the Navy,² thereby introducing, although perhaps in a limited fashion, another of the Commissioners' proposals.

The efficacy of the Acts depended upon the spirit in which they were administered. Burke, who had been largely responsible for launching the administrative reform movement, returned to his old post as Paymaster-General of the Forces, and lost no time in initiating a thorough reorganization of the office. This reorganization brought to light further financial scandals which were not without a dramatic sequel. A chief clerk charged with misappropriation of

¹ 21 Geo. III, c. 48, settled outstanding accounts, 22 Geo. III, c. 81, and 23 Geo. III, c. 50, regulated the office of the Paymaster General of the Forces, 25 Geo. III, c. 31, that of the Treasurer of the Navy. By their provisions the independence of successive accounts ended, and for the future monies drawn on account by these officers were to be deposited at the Bank of England. 23 Geo. III, c. 82, regulated the Exchequer, abolishing certain offices and substituting checks of receipt of tallies. For the resolutions, see *Parliamentary History*, vol. 23, pp. 115-121. The resolution approving the consolidation of the small tax collecting office led to no legislative action. 25 Geo. III, c. 52, abolished the Auditors of Imprest and set up the Commissioners of Audit.

² *Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, p. 140.

funds committed suicide a few days before his trial, and another clerk was sentenced for conniving at the concealment of fraud ¹

There seemed every hope that during the coming years the reforms advised by the Commissioners would be implemented and that there would be radical changes in the methods of conducting public business. However, before the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities had made their reports, the course of contemporary politics had changed, and the prospects of immediate further reforms receded. The French Revolution broke out. In England, those who had been reformers now defended traditional institutions, even perhaps traditional abuses. Burke, who had hitherto urged "economical reforms," no longer opposed existing practices. Parliament received the reports on public offices without comment. For nine years no further administrative reforms took place. Meanwhile the English went to war with the French. War was costly: public expenditure rose sharply. After some years Members of Parliament again began to question the way in which public money was being spent.

A Secretaryship of War was created in 1794, with an establishment of £13,000 ². In the House of Lords, the Marquess of Lansdowne criticized expenditure on this new establishment, and pointed out that as yet nothing had been done to consolidate offices in the manner proposed by the Commissioners of Public Accounts and approved by the House of Commons in their resolution of 1782. Moreover, he drew attention to the need for reform in the Customs, where nothing had been done to reduce the 196 sinecure offices ³. The following year the same issues were raised in the House of Commons, ⁴ although here speakers paid more attention to the political than to the administrative issues involved. The debates marked a revival of interest in administrative questions. Once again Members showed concern over the increases in public expenditure. Consequently, in 1797 the Government appointed a Select Committee on Finance. ⁵ This Committee reviewed the findings of the two Commissions, ascertained whether any of the recommendations had been adopted by the departments, and received reports on the subject from those concerned. They took up the work where the Commissioners had left off, working on similar lines, and accepting their predecessors' findings.

¹ *Parliamentary History*, vol. 23, pp. 923-926

² *Ibid.*, vol. 33 (1794), p. 965

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 32 (1794), p. 1043

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 33, pp. 963-966

⁵ The Committee made twenty-two reports. These, together with the proceedings thereon, are printed in vols. 12 and 13 of the *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*.

The appointment of the Select Committee marked the opening of a period of unrelenting activity in administrative reform. From this time onwards many inquiries were instituted into particular problems. By means of both legislative and administrative action public offices were by degrees transformed, and the foundations of the Civil Service laid.

Improving Checks and Controls

The debates in Parliament in 1782 on the first reports from the Commissioners on Public Accounts, showed that Members were no longer willing to look tolerantly at those financial laxities which had been common for years amongst officers of all ranks in positions of financial trust. The task of establishing more scrupulous standards was not easy. Not only had old traditions to be broken down, but also new techniques had to be devised. An adequate system of audit was a necessary prelude to the establishment of a financially reliable public service.

An Act of 1785 abolished the sinecure Auditors of Imprest¹ and set up in their place a Board of Commissioners. These Commissioners and their subordinates were appointed by the Treasury and received salaries in place of the fees enjoyed by their predecessors. The reform was moderately successful. Evidence showed that by 1797 the Receivers-General, whose conduct had been criticized in 1780, now forwarded the proceeds of their tax collections more promptly, and that despite the increase in the revenue, the volume of the balances in their hands had appreciably diminished. Moreover, deficits were less frequent.² On the other hand there were still delays in delivering in accounts. Thus the Army Pay Office had submitted no accounts to the Auditors for upwards of eleven years.³

As time passed events revealed the inadequacies of the precautions already taken. The use of public money for private advantage persisted despite the Act of 1785. The Naval Inquiry Commission disclosed that large sums of money were withdrawn from the Bank of England and placed with private bankers whilst Lord Melville was Treasurer of the Navy. The impeachment of Lord Melville failed, the blame fell on his Paymaster. A few years later, before a Committee on Public Expenditure, one of the Joint Paymasters of the

¹ 25 Geo III, c 52. Each of the Auditors received £7,000 a year for life in compensation for loss of fees.

² 8th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. Reports from Committees of the House of Commons, vol. xii, p. 223.

³ Ibid., 19th Report, vol. xii, p. 356.

Forces admitted to drawing money under the head of Army Extraordinaries, which was for his private use.¹ There were similar defaults in the office of the Paymaster of Marines.²

These set-backs were discouraging, and, as the Committee on Public Finance put it, induced "a reasonable mistrust as to the efficacy of all legitimate provisions and directions; in the cases where the temptations to a contrary practice are great, the means of evasion have not been found impracticable."³ Nevertheless fresh Acts were passed which were intended to establish more adequate control.⁴

There were those in the Government who realized the imperative need for an adequate audit system if frauds were to be stopped. When, in 1806, Lord Henry Petty, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, rose to move the appointment of a Commission to inquire into abuses in public accounting in the West Indies, he took the opportunity of examining the existing audit situation in some detail. "It will surprise the House and the public to hear," he said, "that there are accounts not passed to the amount of £167,000,000—that there are accounts not proceeded in to the amount of £58,000,000—that there are twenty-one years pay-office accounts to the amount of £150,000,000 not delivered in—that there are naval accounts in the same situation to the amount of £80,000,000, and, to sum up the whole, that the arrears make the enormous sum of £455,000,000 of public money unaccounted for, that is to say a larger sum unaccounted for than composes the whole of the national debt."⁵ He suggested a number of reasons why this state of affairs had come about. The internal organization of the Board of Auditors was faulty. The

¹ Mr Steele, the Joint Paymaster, said in evidence "The two sums (£7,000 and £12,000) mentioned by Mr Thomas were issued by my direction, and I have no hesitation in stating that they were not issued for Public Service, I thought, as others did at the same time, that I had full authority to direct those issues." Mr Steele directed the deputy cashier to enter the sums under the head of Extraordinaries of the Army. *Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, P P*, 1807, II, p. 317.

² The Hon George Villiers, who was first appointed to the post in March 1792, was reappointed in 1803. At the time of his reappointment his accounts for seven years were unsettled. *Ibid*, 5th Report, *P P*, 1810, II, pp. 370 and 372.

³ *Ibid*, p. 372.

⁴ 45 Geo III, c. 58, required more frequent submission of accounts by the Paymaster General of the Forces. 47 Geo III, c. 56, regulated the transactions of the Treasurer of the Navy.

⁵ *The substance of the Speech of the Right Hon Lord Henry Petty, Chancellor of the Exchequer, May 21, 1806, on a motion for leave to bring in a Bill to provide for the more effectual examination of the public accounts, and the better discovery of frauds* (1806), p. 14.

Commissioners had been disinclined to act because their authority was treated with less respect than it was entitled to, since the date of their appointment public business had greatly increased. He gave more details of this increase in another speech. In 1784, after the American War, the permanent revenue amounted to £19,000,000. In 1807 it amounted to £32,000,000.¹ This naturally meant that the work of the Auditors was trebled. It was imperative that the existing state of affairs should be remedied. Petty affirmed that the Government intended to bring in the necessary measure. "If this remedy is found weak and ineffectual," he concluded, "it will be the duty of the Treasury to come again to Parliament, and to persevere till that system of audit, which is the great instrument of correction, and therefore one of the vital principles of the country, is made fully adequate to the discharge of its important functions." He did not over-estimate the need for perseverance. Despite improvements effected by Acts of 1806² and 1813³ a Select Committee on Finance of 1819 found that arrears continued to accumulate.⁴

One of the main obstacles to improvement lay in the condition of the Exchequer offices. The Act of 1785 had failed to embody the more radical of the suggestions made by the Commissioners on Public Accounts. The Latin language and numerals were still employed in official documents. By 1819 nothing had been done to relieve accountants from observing "tedious and unnecessary forms."⁵ Some of the more important sinecure offices were to be found at the Exchequer, and the Act of 1785 had not altered the system which allowed fees to be paid to various high officials on the passing of accounts.

An Act of 1817, which abolished important Exchequer sinecures,⁶ opened the way for a more radical treatment of the office. Four years later another Act introduced reforms intended to speed up and simplify the passing of accounts.⁷ Certain useless formalities were done away with, and the use of the English language and of common numerals required. Moreover, the Act gave the Treasury power to

¹ PETTY, LORD HENRY *Substance of the Speech delivered in the Committee of Finance, January 29, 1807* (1807), p. 13

² 45 Geo. III, c. 91

³ 53 Geo. III, c. 150

⁴ 5th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, P P, 1819, II, p. 199

⁵ Ibid

⁶ 57 Geo. III, c. 60. Sinecures are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

⁷ 1 & 2 Geo. IV, c. 121. Accounts were not to be engrossed on parchment, nor had they to pass through the office of the Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer and the Clerk of the Pipe. The Lords Commissioners of the Treasury were to compensate those officers who lost fees as a result of these rearrangements.

establish by warrant any new arrangement which they thought fit in the Audit Office

Difficulties were by no means completely surmounted. A Committee reporting in 1819 found that the Lords of the Treasury, who had acquired the patronage of posts in the Audit Office, when this was created to replace the offices of the Auditors of Imprest, had appointed men some of whom lacked the necessary qualifications for their work, and who had to be dismissed at the end of their probation.¹ Such appointments no doubt hindered the growth of efficiency in the Office. At the Exchequer, officers did not welcome reform. They went on using Latin figures and the Latin language wherever they were not expressly directed by statute to do otherwise.² Not until 1832 had further legislation effected the reforms advocated in the reports of 1782.³

A Committee reporting in 1810 expressed the opinion that the difficulties encountered in reforming public accounting and auditing would not have arisen had the supervision of the kingdom's accounts been placed under the control of any one department, possessed of authority and immediately responsible to Parliament.⁴ Exchequer and Audit continued to remain separate departments until they were consolidated by an Act of 1866.⁵ Thus finally the foundations of efficiency in this sphere were cemented

Charles Dickens vividly satirized the slow process of Exchequer reform in words which are worth quoting "Ages ago," he told the Administrative Reform Association in a speech in 1855, "a savage mode of keeping accounts on notched sticks was introduced into the Court of Exchequer, the accounts were kept, much as Robinson Crusoe kept his calendar on his desert island. In the course of considerable revolutions of time, the celebrated Mr Crocker was born and died, Mr Walkinghame, of the Tutor's assistant, and a terrible hand at figures, was born, and died, a multitude of accountants, book-keepers, actuaries, and mathematicians, were born, and died; and still official routine clung to the notched sticks, as if they were pillars of the constitution, and still the Exchequer accounts continued to be kept on splints of elm wood, called 'tallies.' Late in the reign of George III, some restless and revolutionary spirit originated the

¹ 5th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, P P, 1819, II, p. 201

² Papers Laid before the Select Committee on Public Accounts, P P, 1831, xiv, p. 7.

³ In 1832, 2 & 3 William IV, c. 104, further speeded audit & c. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, regulated the Office of the Receipt of the Exchequer

⁴ 5th Report (2nd Part) from the Committee on Public Expenditure, 1810, P.P., 1810, 1, pp. 390-394

⁵ 29 & 30

1810, P.P., 1810, 1, Victoria, c. 39,

suggestions, whether, in a land where there were pens, ink, and paper, slates and pencils, and systems of accounts, this rigid adherence to a barbarous usage might not possibly border on the ridiculous? All the red tape in the public offices turned redder at the bare mention of this bold and original conception, and it took till 1826 to get the sticks abolished."¹

Although the facts and dates diverge a little from ours, this description is a graphic summary of the history we have traced. It had taken decades to make effective the reforms suggested in 1782. The slowness of the progress is, perhaps, some index to the difficulties that had to be overcome. It was not easy for the Auditors to exercise their authority. It was not easy to exact financial scrupulousness from officers of whom standards of integrity had not been demanded before. It was not easy to sweep away routines that had persisted undisturbed for a great many years. Yet the reforms achieved were of the utmost significance. The introduction of efficient methods of auditing accounts promptly and adequately played no small part in creating a financially reliable Civil Service.

Apart from the misappropriation of public money, experience had shown the need for removing from public servants the more obvious opportunities for peculation. When the Commissions sat at the end of the eighteenth century, no regulations prevented those employed in public departments from being financially interested in Government contracts. Indeed it had been customary for the Treasury to give beneficial contracts to persons selected by favour. This custom, although beneficial to the individuals concerned, was expensive for the public. At the end of the American Wars, Pitt put an end to the practice, and supplies had to be purchased through the official victuallers.² However, it took some time for the new standards to be accepted. The peculations in the victualling departments were notorious. In the Post Office the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities found that many officers, from the Secretary down to the Chamber Keeper, were financially interested in the packet service. The expenditure during the past years they described as "so enormous as almost to surpass credibility." They strongly urged that an end should be made to such transactions.³ In 1797 it was found that

¹ Administrative Reform Association, Official Papers

² ROSE, GEORGE *Observations Respecting the Public Expenditure and the Influence of the Crown* (1810), p. 29. This book, which is a defence of Government policy, and a plea that sufficient reforms had already taken place, probably exaggerated the efficacy of measures already taken.

³ 10th Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities, P P, 1806, vii, p. 792.

these recommendations had not been taken seriously in the department concerned, and that abuses still abounded in the management of the packet boats.¹ However, in October of that year, the Secretary at the Treasury, George Rose, wrote to the Postmaster-General insisting that measures of reform should be taken, and at the end of the month he received a reply stating that the rule that officers and agents should have no interest in the packet boats was being strictly enforced.² It looked as though the Government meant to enforce new standards. There was no fresh legislation: the prohibition worked through administrative channels. As the methods of accounting and auditing improved, it became easier to detect minor peculations, and thus the integrity of public servants was ensured.

Suppression of Sinecures

The existence of numbers of sinecure offices was a hindrance to efficiency and economy alike. From an administrative point of view there was nothing which could be said in their defence. They had, however, become a part of the political machine, a convenient way of rewarding party supporters. This fact added considerably to the difficulties involved in abolishing them. When the matter came up for discussion in the House of Commons, an Opposition from whose hands the right of distributing these prizes had passed, attacked them as sources of "corruption," and paid little attention to the administrative issues involved. On the other hand Pitt, who had himself refused a lucrative sinecure, the Clerkship of the Pells, declared in the House of Commons in 1797 that "sinecure offices are given in the nature of a freehold tenure. Parliament has expressly said, they will respect them, as freehold property. and if, in answer to this solemn declaration, it is urged, that Parliament may rescind their former resolutions, I say they may, by a parity of reasoning destroy every kind of property in the country."³

Political considerations made the task of reform difficult. Successive bodies which investigated either public finance or public offices stressed the need for abolition, yet no measures were introduced to do away with all sinecures and prohibit the use of deputies. The process of reform was gradual and somewhat piecemeal. At first,

¹ 7th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 188.

² *Ibid.*, *Proceedings*, vol. xiii, pp. 717-718.

³ *Parliamentary History*, vol. 33, p. 87. For a discussion of the political significance of sinecures, see HALÉVY *A History of the English People*, Penguin edition, vol. 1, pp. 30-35.

what may be described as passive methods were used. The Select Committee on Finance of 1797 found that 46 of the 196 sinecures which the Commissioners on Public Accounts had discovered in the Customs Department had fallen in and had not been refilled. One had fallen in in 1794 and had been refilled, and two had been allowed to change hands. A hundred subsidiary posts in the Customs had been suppressed.¹ However, it would have taken decades to eliminate sinecures by these methods. One of the main objects of appointing the Select Committee on Finance was that means should be found of cutting down public expenditure. The abolition of sinecure offices offered a way of so doing which would in no way interfere with the efficiency of public offices. Moreover, the Committee firmly supported the views on this subject which had been firmly and clearly expressed by the Commissioners on Public Accounts, and the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities.

Soon after the Committee's reports were received, an Act was passed abolishing the 196 sinecure posts in the Customs.² The following year the Auditorship of Land Revenue, one of the Exchequer sinecures, was also abolished, and the duties of the office transferred to the Commissioners for Auditing Public Accounts.³ In October 1797 the Commissioners of Stamps were asked to prepare a Bill to secure that in future all vacancies in their department should be filled by officers who executed their duties in person.⁴

There, for the time being, the matter rested. No further measures were introduced nor inquiries instituted until the expenses consequent on the French Wars once more roused anxiety over mounting public expenditure. The Committee on Public Expenditure which was appointed in 1807 devoted the whole of its third report to a consideration of sinecure offices. They listed existing sinecures, and recommended that some should be abolished and that the emoluments derived from others should be considerably reduced.⁵ They enumerated those offices which were held by Members of Parliament.⁶ They criticized the power of the Crown to grant offices in reversion, a practice which, they said, "can never have obtained with

¹ 4th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. *Reports from Select Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 58.

² 38 Geo. III, c. 86.

³ 39 Geo. III, c. 83.

⁴ *Proceedings on the Select Committee of Finance, Reports from Select Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 716. The Bill does not appear to have been brought before Parliament.

⁵ 3rd Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, P P, 1808, iii, p. 274.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Appendix 80, p. 443.

regard to efficient Offices, without considerable risk of ultimately producing the effect of converting them, so far as respects the Principals, into Sinécures, or into Offices to be executed wholly by Deputy."¹

When the Report was received, the House of Commons passed a series of résolutions favouring the abolition of all offices which had revenue without employment, the reduction in value of those mainly or entirely executed by deputy to the emoluments actually received for executing the business of the office, and the appointment of a Select Committee to consider what offices came within the purview of these resolutions.²

The Select Committee on Sinécure Offices, which was appointed in 1810, made a thorough survey of the situation. They found throughout the dominions 242 sinécure offices, with a total income of £297,095 per annum.³ The position was better than it had been in 1797. There were now but few offices which had revenue without any employment.⁴ There were two classes of offices which had still to be dealt with: those which had revenue extremely disproportionate to employment, and those where the effective duties were executed wholly or mainly by deputy. The Committee examined both classes carefully and recommended which offices should be abolished and which consolidated. Early in 1813 a Bill was introduced to give effect to their findings. It was thrown out by the House of Lords. The hostility of the Lords also prevented the passing of a permanent Bill to do away with the right of granting offices in reversion, the right to grant these offices had therefore to be suspended by a series of temporary measures.⁵

By this time the supporters of sinécures were on the defensive. George Rose, who had been Secretary at the Treasury at the time when certain of the reforms advocated by the Select Committee on Finance of 1797 were put into force, pleaded that reform had gone

¹ 3rd Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, P P, 1808, ii, pp 274-275.

² Parliamentary History (1810), vol 17, p 229

³ Report from the Select Committee on Sinécure Offices, P P, 1834, vi, pp 347-348.

⁴ Only six came within this category: the Justice in Eyre North of the Trent, the Law Clerk in the Secretary of State's Office, the Collector and Transmitter of State Papers in the same office, the Housekeeper in the Excise; the Warehouse-keeper to the Stamp Office, the Constable of the Castle of Limerick. 1st Report from the Select Committee on Sinécure Offices, P P, 1810, ii, p 592

⁵ In 1814 the Lord Chancellor, speaking against the temporary measure then before the House of Lords, pointed out that a Bill for permanent abolition had six times been rejected by their Lordships, five times on second reading, once on third reading. Parliamentary Debates, vol 28, p 635

far enough. He maintained that considering the increase of public business the rise in expenditure had been commendably moderate. Moreover, moderate pensions and sinecures were, he felt, legitimate rewards for political service.¹ It must be admitted that Rose was by no means an impartial observer. In 1808 he held the posts of Treasurer of the Navy, Clerk of the Parliaments, and Keeper of Records in Receipt of the Exchequer: they brought him in a total of £11,602 a year. None of these posts was effective.² Bentham attacked and ridiculed Rose's defence.³

No doubt reform was made more difficult by the fact that fifty-seven sinecure posts were held by Members of Parliament. Indeed, it is to the credit of the unreformed House that they tackled the sinecure question from 1797 onwards with considerable determination. A Select Committee on Finance again drew attention to the need for reform in 1817.⁴ Almost at once effective action was taken. In 1817 an Act was passed providing means of pensioning those who had held high and efficient civil offices.⁵ Thereby the most serious objection raised by defenders of sinecures was removed. In the same year Acts were passed regulating offices in the Exchequer,⁶ the Signet and Privy Seal,⁷ the Mint,⁸ and Scotland.⁹ These Acts abolished sinecures, provided that deputyships should end after existing interests were terminated, and adjusted salaries. Thus no mean task was accomplished. The suppression of sinecures and deputyships was a necessary prelude to any effective schemes for reorganizing public offices.

The reformed House of Commons completed the work. When, in 1833, Hume moved a resolution for the abolition of naval and military sinecures, he said that civil sinecures were already practically extinguished.¹⁰ They had become a subject for public political agitation. They were complained of in petitions from the Northern Political Union, and from Fifeshire and Warwick which Thomas Attwood presented to the House in the same year.¹¹ Yet another

¹ ROSE, GEORGE *Observations Respecting the Public Expenditure and the Influence of the Crown* (1810)

² 3rd Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, P P, 1808, III, Appendix 80, p. 443.

³ BENTHAM, JEREMY *Defence of Economy against the late Mr Burke*

⁴ Report from the Select Committee on Finance, P P, 1817, IV, pp. 29 and 30

⁵ 57 Geo. III, c. 65 "An Act to enable His Majesty to recompense the Services of Persons holding, or who have held certain high and efficient Civil Offices." The classification of persons who might be included was extended by 6 Geo. IV, c. 90

⁶ 57 Geo. III, c. 60 and 84

⁷ 57 Geo. III, c. 63

⁸ 57 Geo. III, c. 67

⁹ 57 Geo. III, c. 64

¹⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 15, pp. 660 ff

¹¹ *Ibid*, vol. 19, pp. 80-81.

investigation was undertaken. The Select Committee on Sinecure Offices which reported in 1834 found that the 242 offices of 1810 had been reduced to 100, with total emoluments of £97,803 per annum.¹ Of these offices many were due to be abolished as they fell in under existing parliamentary provision. The emoluments of the remainder amounted to £17,000 per annum. The Committee recommended abolition "in the firm persuasion that any thing in the nature of a Sinecure Office, with emoluments attached to it at the public charge, is alike indefensible in principle, pernicious as a means of influence, and grievous as an undue addition to the general burden of the Nation."² Three years later the same Committee outlined the basis on which officers should be pensioned when their posts had been suppressed. So the task was completed.

Thus by 1834 the four maxims laid down by the Commissioners on Public Accounts had been fully recognized. Offices were no longer held by legal tenure, every office had a useful duty annexed to it, every officer executed himself the duty of his office, and many offices where the duties were similar had been consolidated. As a result much needless expenditure was eliminated, and some major obstacles to efficiency removed. Moreover, the Treasury had acquired the right to regulate offices from time to time as need arose, a right which was calculated to prevent a recurrence of the old problem of the survival of offices which were no longer useful offices. To realize the full value of these reforms it must be remembered that they were being carried out concurrently with other important measures regulating the conduct of public offices.

Pay and Pensions

The interdependent questions of pay and pensions played an important part in the evolution of the Civil Service. Inadequate salaries and the absence of systematic superannuation schemes had been quoted as justification for the various practices by which clerks and other officers engaged on public business were in the habit of augmenting their incomes. Absence of common scales of pay for those doing similar work in different public offices emphasized the independent nature of the departments. Indeed, until the passing of two important Acts in 1810 and 1816 it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that salaries were a purely departmental concern. Subsequently, when annual returns had to be made of all public salaries, allowances

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Sinecure Offices*, P P, 1834, vi, pp 347-348

² *Ibid*, p 341.

and pensions, and when Parliament voted the sums necessary for defraying their cost, a new phase in the history of the Service began.

The Commissioners of 1780 and 1785 recognized the need for changing existing practices. They suggested that graduated salaries should take the place of existing emoluments, and detailed scales for those offices which they examined. They proposed that the existing taxes on salaries should be abolished, that those who retired from disabilities of ill-health or old age should receive pensions; that clerks should be forbidden to increase their incomes by the exercise of agencies and similar devices. Some of these suggestions were derived from the experience of existing offices. It is clear that the Commissioners looked upon these reforms as interdependent.

The process of change was gradual, and in the majority of offices unaccompanied by legislation. The minority was represented by such offices as the Audit Office and the offices of the Paymaster-General of the Forces and the Treasurer of the Navy, where far-reaching changes were instituted and the substitution of salaries for fees and other emoluments figured as a detail in a much larger reorganization. At the Treasury, where fees had been funded and salaries paid since 1782, further reforms were introduced in 1793. The establishment was settled at a figure considerably higher than that recommended by the Commissioners, and clerks retained their right to the condemned New Year gifts.¹ In the offices of the Secretaries of State fees were funded as the result of an Order in Council of 1795, but neither the receipt of gratuities nor the exercise of agencies were forbidden.² Salaries were introduced at the Post Office³ in 1793, and before 1797 at the Army Pay Office⁴ and the Sick and Hurt Office.⁵ At that date fees had been funded neither at the Admiralty,⁶ the War Office,⁷ nor at the Victualling Board.⁸

Thus the degree of attention paid to the Commissioners' recommendations varied from office to office. In some, salaries took the place of other emoluments, in others the old methods of payment were retained. The departments did not seem to realize that it was undesirable for officers to augment their official incomes by muscel-

¹ *15th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, pp. 287-288.

² *Report from the Committee Appointed by the Treasury to Inquire into the Fees and Emoluments in Public Offices*, P P, 1837, xlv, p. 163.

³ *7th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, pp. 178-179.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19th Report, p. 359.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. xiii, 33rd Report, pp. 567-568.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. xii, 17th Report, p. 329.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19th Report, p. 359.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. xiii, 32nd Report, p. 509.

laneous means. The smaller gratuities continued and so did place-selling in all the offices subordinate to the Navy Board, with the exception only of the Navy Office.¹ Except in the office of the Treasurer of the Navy, schemes for superannuation were not introduced as a necessary accompaniment to regulated salaries: the interdependence of the two proposals had not been recognized.

When the Select Committee on Finance of 1797 corroborated the Commissioners' findings, active steps were taken to put them into force. The Secretary at the Treasury wrote to the various departments asking the official heads for comments on the proposed reforms. Some of the replies were favourable, others evasive or hostile. A minute dated October 1797 records that it was resolved that henceforward New Year gifts should not be received by individuals at the Treasury. Equivalent sums were to be paid into the fee-fund.² A Royal Warrant dated November 1797 directed that a fee-fund should be established at the War Office from which salaries were to be paid,³ whilst an Order in Council of 1800 ordered similar arrangements for the various offices connected with the Navy.⁴ Fees in the Customs department were regulated by a series of Acts the first of which was passed in 1806.⁵ The Stamp Office was not regulated before 1810,⁶ nor the Privy Seal and Signet Offices until considerably later. Yet by the opening years of the nineteenth century it was clearly accepted in principle that those employed in public offices should be paid by salaries rather than by other forms of emolument.

The desirability of the contingent reforms found less immediate recognition. There was, for instance, the question of the taxes on salaries. The Lords of the Treasury were not prepared to sacrifice the proceeds of these taxes, and contented themselves with amalgamating the two Receiverships,⁷ a measure which, while it reduced the expenses of collection, left the problem exactly where it had been.

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xiii, 31st Report, Appendix F3, p. 501.

² *Ibid.*, p. 724.

³ *Report from the Committee on Fees and Emoluments in Public Offices, P.P.*, 1837, xlv, p. 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵ 46 Geo. III, c. 82, 47 Geo. III, c. 51, 48 Geo. III, c. 56.

⁶ *Report from the Committee on Fees and Emoluments in Public Offices, P.P.*, 1837, xlv, p. 325.

⁷ The amalgamation was effected by Letters of Privy Seal dated January 1800. There had been a Receiver for the 1s duties and a Receiver for the 6d duties. The total average annual collection from the two duties, calculated for the seven years preceding 1797, was £76,276. See *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xiii, pp. 787-788.

The Committee on Public Expenditure of 1808, an economy committee, considered the question of salaries. They were concerned with cutting down public expenses as far as was compatible with efficiency. They considered that "the Public ought unquestionably to be served as cheaply as is consistent with being served with integrity and ability" It was not only the remuneration which was of consequence in the higher offices, but also the position and the "power of obliging friends and of creating dependents." In the lower positions they approved the principle of "gradually increasing Salaries after certain periods of service, and at fixed intervals, if they are not too short."¹ Increments on these lines were introduced by a number of departmental acts²

When the Commissioners of 1780 and 1785 had suggested that the methods of paying public servants should be altered, they had stressed the importance of including pensions as part of the scheme. The Select Committee on Finance of 1797 approved the principle of superannuation. Schemes had operated for a number of years in the Customs and Excise departments, but they had not included all officers. It was in the Customs that the first comprehensive scheme was put into operation. Its basis was outlined in a Treasury Minute of August 1803, which prescribed that "any officer having served with diligence and fidelity, and, being reported by the Commissioners of the Customs as being absolutely incapable, from infirmity of mind or body, to execute the duties of his office, and as a fit object to retire, shall be entitled to one-third of the emoluments attached to the office. If he should have served ten years, and not less than twenty, and not being sixty years of age, to be entitled to one-half of the emoluments. If he should have served twenty years or more, or having served fifteen years, and being more than sixty years of age, to be entitled to two-thirds of the emoluments"³ This proved important in the subsequent history of superannuation. The standard it set was accepted as a model by the Committee on Public Expenditure, and by those who drafted the Excise pension scheme⁴

The next important development took place in 1810, when an Act

¹ 3rd Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, P P, 1808, 111, p. 272.

² Report to the King in Council on the Secretary of State's Office for the Home Department contains a list of the offices which had introduced increments P P, 1822, xvii, p. 151

³ Report from the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure, P P, 1828, v, p. 490

⁴ 49 Geo. III, c. 96, amended by 52 Geo. III, c. 81. A separate Act, 50 Geo. III, c. 44, dealt with Scottish officers

was passed which affected both pay and pensions¹ It provided that annual returns should be made to Parliament of increases and decreases in public salaries and pensions, and that in certain offices deficiencies in the fee funds should be made good from the Civil List This clause was amended six years later, when it was enacted that deficiencies should be made good from monies voted for the purpose by Parliament² Thus the salaries of officers employed in public departments became the direct concern of Parliament, and a constant subject of debate and controversy The provisions dealing with pensions were undoubtedly designed to check the irregularities discovered by the Committee on Public Expenditure. The Act stipulated that no pension nor compensation for loss of office should be granted without the sanction of the Commissioners of the Treasury. A maximum scale founded on the Customs' model defined the amounts payable after given periods of service Whatever may have been the intention of those who drafted the Act, the interpretation given to it was that all retiring Civil Servants had a right to a pension Thus, whether accidentally or purposely, Civil Servants became salaried and pensionable officers In later years it was asserted that the increases in superannuation expenditure which followed were unwarranted, and that Heads of Departments had taken advantage of the provisions of the Act to rid themselves of their less useful subordinates³ It has to be remembered, however, that these accusations were brought by what was essentially a retrenchment committee

A new chapter in Civil Service history now opened. Order increased, but policy for some years to come vacillated. Superannuation rates were now similar for all retiring officers by degrees salaries were becoming more methodically scaled, but the policy of the Government underwent convulsive changes. Principles approved at one time were shortly afterwards decried Both the rates of pay and of pensions of Civil Servants became the subject of constant criticism

The French Wars had been expensive there were loud complaints at the consequent rise in public expenditure. In 1817 a Select Committee on Finance was appointed to examine the situation. Already a number of departments had adopted the practice, advocated by the Committee on Public Expenditure of 1808, of giving their officers

¹ 50 Geo. III, c 117

² 56 Geo. III, c 46

³ *Report from the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure*, P P. 828, v, p 491

annual salary increments. As a measure of economy these payments were suspended by a Treasury Minute of July 1817. There was an immediate outcry in the departments affected. The Lords of the Treasury reconsidered the question and found that "the increased salaries for length of service" did not seem to "confer upon individuals greater rewards than the diligent discharge of the duties of the various situations would fairly entitle them to." The suspension was therefore withdrawn in October 1818, and at the same time the departments were exhorted to be economical. In response, however, to the clamour for economy and to addresses received from both Houses, the suspension was again put on in April 1821, and further measures of economy considered. The Treasury establishment was revised. Those receiving salaries greater than they were entitled to under the new regulations, were to retain them until by promotion or length of service they were entitled to an equal or greater amount under the new establishment. Details of the new scales operative in the Treasury were sent to the heads of other departments, together with explicit general rules which they were asked to consider. The year 1797 was chosen as the norm, and offices were to be restored to the level of that year, both in regard to salary scales and the number of personnel. Any increases considered necessary through increased business needed special scrutiny. Additional officers were to be paid on the same rate as those doing equivalent work in 1797. The necessity for curtailing expenditure on superannuation was also considered. It was decided that for the future the scheme should be made contributory. A percentage scale was outlined.¹ The following January the suspended increments were restored, but at the same time deductions for superannuation were instituted. Officers earning between £50 and £100 a year were to pay 2½ per cent on their salaries and those earning over £100 a year 5 per cent. In addition, 10 per cent was to be paid on any excess of salary over the rate to which an officer was entitled under the new scales.² Shortly afterwards these deductions received legislative sanction in an Act which also revised the amounts of superannuation to which officers were entitled after given periods of service.³

What, it might well be asked, was the Government's policy with regard to the Civil Service? Was there a policy, or was the Government of the day merely cutting down expenses by the simplest means available?

¹ Treasury Minute dated August 10, 1821, *PP*, 1822, xvii, pp. 6-10.

² Treasury Minute dated January 8, 1822, *ibid*, p. 11. ³ 3 Geo. IV, c. 113.

Nicholas Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, explained the Bill of 1822 to the House of Commons in some detail. He was hopeful of returning to the standards of 1796 or 1797, despite the increased business. Why these years were taken as a criterion, he did not explain. He recognized that business had increased in the interval, and judged that at the Treasury this increase was in the proportion of 6 : 1. He admitted that the new arrangement was a way of reducing salaries, and estimated that the annual saving would be in the neighbourhood of £27,000.¹

If the majority of Members of Parliament were satisfied with the new measure it was otherwise with the clerks in Public Offices. They protested against the Act, and petitioned for a reconsideration of its terms. Canning, speaking against the Act, reminded Members of changes which had taken place since 1797. Fees and gratuities had been abolished, and so too had sinecures, so that officers were now entirely dependent upon their salaries and pensions.² Eventually the complainants secured such strong support that the Government was induced to repeal those clauses of the Act which sanctioned the deductions for superannuation, and to refund the money already collected.³

This settlement was but temporary. The clamour for retrenchment continued, and a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into Public Income and Expenditure. This Committee raised once more the question of superannuation and discussed in some detail the principles which they considered should decide the scales of pay for Civil Servants. Their views differed fundamentally from those of previous investigators, and are worth quoting fully. "The Committee," they reported, "can see no reason to doubt that the principle of competition is as applicable to the remuneration given to Clerks for their time and trouble as is the price for time and trouble of other persons who live by the wages of labour, and if those who have the management of Public interests, wish to take advantage of this principle, they have only to ascertain what salaries are given in Commercial Establishments." Once these rates had been discovered all that it was necessary to do was to "examine whether more talent and trust are required in Public Offices than in those establishments; and if more of those qualities are required, then to make the salaries in Public Offices proportionately higher."⁴ They then proceeded to

¹ *Parliamentary Debates* (1822), N S, vol. 6, pp. 1015-1026.

² *Ibid.* (1824), N S, vol. 11, pp. 726-727.

³ 5 Geo IV, c. 104.

⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure*, P.P., 1828, v, p. 20.

illustrate this simple axiom, and to show that public salaries were capable of reduction

Their views upon superannuation were equally clear. They were in favour of re-instituting the deductions. They suggested, however, that a distinction should be drawn between those who held office in the expectation of receiving allowances on existing conditions, and those to be appointed hereafter. There was no injustice, they argued, in restoring the deductions, since salary scales had been revised by the Treasury after the scheme came into force. Since the produce of the fund derived from the deductions would not be large enough to meet the cost of allowances on the scales sanctioned by the Act of 1822, the difference in cost should be borne by the public. For those appointed subsequently, the superannuation allowances should be wholly provided by deductions from their salaries, "so that the Public may not eventually have to bear any part of the expense of these allowances." They further recommended that superannuation allowances should only be granted on a rate of salary that had been enjoyed for at least three years, that no allowance should be enjoyed at the same time as a salary for efficient services under the Crown, and that no allowance should exceed two-thirds of the salary previously received. They recommended the immediate discontinuance of the practice which existed in some departments of granting retired allowances to "artificers, tradesmen of various kinds, labourers in the Establishments under the Navy and the Ordnance," and also to messengers. "These persons," they commented, "are employed in the exercise of their several trades and professions at a daily pay, and are at liberty to seek more lucrative engagements whenever they please. They are therefore on a footing wholly distinct from that of the Public Servant, who devotes himself upon a permanent engagement to the service of the State." Exceptions should only be made for claims "founded upon peculiar service accompanied by distress," and in those cases the Treasury should never sanction a pension of more than £20 per annum.¹ When the Committee found these payments unwarranted by the Superannuation Acts, they failed to point out that they were of ancient usage and had been customary long before the introduction of superannuation for Civil Servants.

Thus the Committee had shown that if the country wanted retrenchment, this could be secured by paying Civil Servants at rates dictated by the competitive market, and by readopting the deductions

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Income and Expenditure, P.P., 1828, v, p 495*

for superannuation which had so recently aroused keen resentment and opposition. Almost at once the Government introduced a Superannuation Allowances Bill. The Chancellor of the Exchequer drew attention to the rapid growth of the charges for what he described as the ineffective part of the public service.¹ He admitted that the increase was in part due to the reduction of offices carried out in accordance with the policy of economical reform. He saw but two alternatives: either the drastic reduction of salaries "to such a degree as should be barely sufficient to remunerate the labour performed," or the readoption of the principles of the Act of 1822. When the Bill was read a second time, a Member rose to present a petition signed by upwards of five hundred clerks in the various public offices. The petitioners pointed out that besides being a breach of compact, the Bill sought to charge on the smaller number of Civil Servants now employed the cost of the allowances to a great number of persons who had been discharged when the establishments were reduced. Another petition in a similar vein had been signed by clerks in the Ordnance department. The Bill was unfavourably received. One Member, speaking against it, quoted Burke's view that parsimony was not economy, and that a good servant well paid was the most valuable and the cheapest. After some discussion the Bill was withdrawn.²

Despite this defeat the Government did not abandon all their schemes. The Treasury considered how they could comply with the Committee's recommendations so far as future appointments were concerned, for with regard to these, no question of existing interests could arise. The results of their deliberations were embodied in a Minute of August 1829, which stated that deductions would be made from the salaries of all Civil Servants thereafter appointed. A notice of the terms was to be given to each man on his appointment. The rates of the deductions were $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on salaries of less than £100 a year and 5 per cent on all those over that amount.³

The question of superannuation was not brought before the House again until 1834. In that year an Act was passed which embodied the provisions of the Minute of 1829.⁴ It was stipulated that no superannuation allowance nor allowance for compensation for loss of office should be enjoyed at the same time as a salary for efficient

¹ *Parliamentary Debates* (1828), N S, vol. xix, p. 1641.

² *Ibid*, pp. 1682-1684.

³ *Report from the Commission appointed to Inquire into the Superannuation Act, P.P.*, 1857 (session 2), xxiv, p. 220.

⁴ 4 & 5 William IV, c. 24.

services that allowances should only be made to those under the age of 65 who were certified as incapable by infirmity of mind or body by the Head of their Department and by two medical practitioners. This Act governed the granting of superannuation allowances until 1859.

Thus before 1832 the position of those employed in public offices had been radically changed. In all departments Civil Servants received salaries; the scales still differed from office to office, but superannuation was administered on a uniform system throughout the service.

Recruitment and Conditions of Work

The only customary method of appointment to which the Commissioners of 1780 and 1785 and the Select Committee on Finance of 1797 objected, was sale of office. In 1797 it was found that the practice was common in all the offices subordinate to the Navy Board, except the Navy Office.¹ In these offices it was officially sanctioned; perhaps elsewhere it flourished unsanctioned. The matter was raised in the House of Commons in 1809. It was alleged that it was clear from evidence taken before the East India Inquiry that corrupt patronage existed in many departments. One speaker affirmed that it had long been known that for years past Messrs. Pollman and Keylock had run an office for the sale of places. Lord Folkestone introduced a motion for an inquiry into these abuses. The Government opposed the motion, but introduced a Bill for the prevention of the sale and brokerage of offices. Members complained that the introduction of the Bill without a previous inquiry amounted to an attempt to screen the delinquencies.² However, the Government had their way: the motion was defeated, and the Bill passed.³ Thus closed a discreditable chapter of history.

There was little criticism of the way in which the right of patronage was exercised. In 1797 the Commissioners for Stamps suggested to the Treasury that it would be a good thing to end the system by which the Receiver-General, the Comptroller and the Secretary appointed the clerks in their several departments. They saw no justification for the practice, since the clerks were paid from public funds, and they considered it objectionable from the point of view of official regulation and control. They suggested that in future

¹ 31st Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797, Reports from Committees of the House of Commons, vol. xiii, p. 501.

² Parliamentary Debates (1809), vol. 14, pp. 48 ff.

³ 49 Geo. III, c. 126.

appointments should be made on Treasury Warrant, and that persons so nominated should be placed on probation for a reasonable time, in order to test their fitness for the employment.¹ The reply to this letter was not published. In an earlier letter the Treasury had admitted the importance of preventing the appointment of "insufficient persons," and had undertaken not to appoint persons as distributors of stamps until the Commissioners of Stamps had certified the nominee to be properly qualified to discharge the duties of his office.² In 1819 there were complaints that the Lords of the Treasury had appointed a number of insufficiently qualified clerks to the Audit Office.³ But with the exception of these two instances, there was no general criticism of the quality of nominees.

In some departments newly appointed officers served a period of probation, at the end of which those who were unsatisfactory could be dismissed. In the Customs the system was already in operation in 1780, and was extended in response to the suggestions of the Commissioners of Public Accounts.⁴ In the Audit Office the system made it possible to weed out the less satisfactory Treasury nominees.

In the course of time, as economy and the regulation of public offices became subjects of interest to Parliament, more attention was given to the question of appointments. The economy promoting Committee on Public Income and Expenditure of 1828 drew special attention to the practices common in the Ordnance Department. The office had been reorganized in 1825, and since then clerks had been appointed on a three years' probation. During this period their salaries remained stationary at £90 a year. Those found unfit for the work were dismissed. Whatever the patronage of the appointment, no clerk was admitted before he was examined by the Chief Clerk, and his individual qualifications reported to the Board and to the Master-General. No clerk was admitted under the age of 16 years, or over 30. The Committee praised these regulations, and commented that "a strict attention has been paid to those principles on which the business of the Public ought on all occasions to be conducted. The examination before the admission of a Clerk, the period of probation, the rule requiring that each Clerk must be recommended by his Chief Clerk, before he is promoted to a supe-

¹ *Proceedings on the Reports from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xiii, p. 735.

² *Ibid.*, p. 717.

³ *5th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, P P*, 1819, ii, p. 201.

⁴ *4th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797 Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 57.

nior class, and the setting aside of the consideration of Patronage, are regulations that reflect great credit on the authors of them. The arrangement is not only useful with respect to the Department in which it has been introduced, but may also serve as a model for other Departments."¹

Three years later the Treasury began to show an interest in conditions of appointment. By a Minute of 1831 they introduced a system of probation. At the same time they instituted an inquiry to discover what measures were taken in other departments to ascertain the fitness of nominees before their appointments were confirmed. They found that in some departments no regulations had been made nor any probation established.² This state of affairs was considered unsatisfactory. In a Minute dated August 1833 the Lords of the Treasury stated that they deemed it "important that all Offices under the Crown should be filled by Persons competent to perform the duties of their situations, and that strict regulations should be established for the purpose of securing that object, as far as may be practicable." They advocated the introduction into other departments of the regulations they had recently introduced into their own. This growing concern about the competence of Civil Servants was to be of greater significance as time went on. However, had the Lords of the Treasury intended to improve the quality of the Service, they had ample opportunity for doing so, since they had gradually acquired the vast majority of the patronage of the departments subordinate to them.

Promotion was less discussed than appointment. The growth of the practice of allowing increments for length of service has already been described. In many offices clerks were graded. This had been the practice at the Treasury since the reorganization of the establishment in 1782.³ The question arose whether promotion from a junior to a senior grade should or should not take place automatically in accordance with seniority. In a Minute of 1821 the Lords of the Treasury stated that no person was entitled to promotion from one class of office to another on the grounds of seniority only, but always "with reference to his assiduity and ability in the class in which he had been serving." They drew the attention of other Heads of Departments of the State to this ruling.⁴ In 1834 a Minute advocated

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure of the United Kingdom*, P.P., 1828, v, p. 19.

² P.P., 1833, xxiii, p. 437.

³ *2nd Report from the Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities*, P.P., 1806, vii, p. 55.

⁴ Treasury Minute dated August 10, 1821. See P.P., 1822, xvii, p. 7.

promotion by merit in the Treasury Perhaps the purpose of these Minutes was to enable those in authority to pass over the inefficient Certainly later evidence makes it abundantly clear that the Minute was not interpreted to mean that the able were to be promoted more rapidly than their less competent fellows In 1848 Sir Alexander Spearman, who had been in the Service since 1824, said that he knew of no instance in which the Minute had been utilized.¹

However excellent the arrangements in individual departments, no machinery existed for introducing the fruits of successful experiment into other departments. The Committee on Public Income and Expenditure had commended the arrangements in the Ordnance; the Treasury had in consequence introduced a system of probation, and declared in favour of promotion by merit But the Treasury had no power to regulate the organization of other offices it was only possible to circularize the Heads of Departments, and to ask them to consider the desirability of certain changes The Civil Service was un-coordinated In the debate on the Superannuation Allowances Bill in 1828, one member of the House of Commons justly complained that clerks in different departments whose duties were almost the same were remunerated on differing scales of pay, and he urged that the Heads of the Departments should settle these "irregularities."² However, he outlined no technique for co-operation. This problem was discussed by the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure. They pointed out that although the annual estimates were laid before the Board of Treasury, the subsequent course of expenditure was not restrained by a single governing and responsible authority, but remained under the separate management of the different departments. To promote efficiency, each department increased expenditure without considering the total financial burden of the country. Therefore, on grounds of economy, they recommended an effectual control by the Treasury over the departments.³ This suggestion did not bear immediate fruit Co-ordination was the task of later reformers

There was a great variety in the number of days holiday enjoyed by officers in the various departments. For years there had been complaints about the Customs holidays, which amounted to forty-five

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure*, P.P., 1847-48, xviii, p. 204

² *Parliamentary Debates* (1828), N.S., vol. 19, p. 1642

³ *Report from the Select Committee on Public Income and Expenditure*, P.P., 1828, v, p. 7

days in the year excluding Sundays.¹ Both Customs and Excise holidays were regulated by statute.² As a result statutory holidays were reduced to six days in the year, apart from any days which might be appointed by proclamation for general thanksgiving. Other departments also enjoyed long holidays, but the public do not seem to have complained of them.³ There was no standardization of hours and holidays in the various departments for decades. The Treasury had no power to curtail holidays or alter hours of labour in offices outside their immediate control.

Survey

The reforms advocated by the Commissioners of 1780 and 1785 had been gradually introduced between 1782-1830. The subordinate treasuries had been transformed into offices of account, the use of public money for private profit had come to an end. Accounts were punctually audited. A reluctant Exchequer had, with some difficulty, been persuaded to modernize its methods. Sinecures had been abolished, and the execution of duties by deputy prohibited. Successful steps had been taken to curtail the opportunities for speculation. Public offices were now staffed by salaried pensionable officers, who were forbidden to have a financial interest in Government contracts or to utilize their official positions for making money by the exercise of agencies and by similar devices. The reforms which had taken place before 1828 had been mainly founded on the Commissioners' recommendations.

The changes which took place after 1828 had a somewhat different source of inspiration. When the Committee on Public Income and Expenditure which reported in that year spoke of economy, they meant something different from the "economical reforms" advocated at the end of the eighteenth century. Then the desire had been to abolish those offices from which the public derived no apparent benefit, to consolidate offices in which the staffs were inadequately

¹ 4th Report from the Select Committee on Finance, 1797. *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, p. 58.

² Acts of 1806, 1807 and 1808, 46 Geo. III, c. 82, 47 Geo. III, c. 51, and 48 Geo. III, c. 56, regulated holidays in the Customs. Those in the Excise department were regulated by 49 Geo. III, c. 66.

³ Holidays in 1797 were 52 days in the year at the Stamp Office, 49 at the Salt Office, 56 at the Exchequer. In reply to a letter from the Secretary at the Treasury, the responsible Exchequer officers declared themselves to be of opinion that "no benefit to the Public Service can possibly arise from a discontinuance of all or any of the Holidays observed therein." See *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. xii, pp. 177 and 255, vol. xiii, p. 422.

employed, and, in short, to do away with functions and with institutions which were costly and which no longer served a useful purpose. In 1828, on the other hand, the concern was to cut down all forms of public expenditure. Efforts were made to reduce the personnel and the cost of the establishments to the 1797 level. It was asserted that the rates of pay for Civil Servants should be determined by the competitive market rate received by those employed in banking houses and merchant undertakings. The economy policy was carried out successfully. Between 1821 and 1832 there was a saving of 5,758 officers and £965,240.¹

Undoubtedly the policy of economy had been stimulated by the assumption by Parliament of the responsibility for voting Civil Service salaries and pensions, and by the presence of the newly instituted annual returns. Under the old system it had been difficult for people to assess the cost of the public service. Under the new its magnitude became only too apparent. There followed the retrenchment schemes. The Government vacillated in its attitude towards the Service. If under the old system the basic salaries of those employed in public departments had been inadequate and unsystematic, there had been a number of recognized but undesirable ways of supplementing them. Now these were done away with. Undoubtedly the position of many public servants was becoming not only less profitable, but also more uncertain. The special taxes on salaries had been abolished in 1810. Not many years later deductions for superannuation were imposed. It would be interesting to know how the vacillation which characterized policy from 1817 onwards affected the applications for nomination to Civil Service posts. Unfortunately, at this period Civil Servants do not seem to have expressed in print their views on the changes which were taking place. An interesting comment appears in the report of a Committee on Public Expenditure which was published in 1810. The Navy Office, which was accused of having been regrettably inefficient for the past eleven years, drew attention to "the hardships suffered by the Clerks in general from the low state of their salaries and the abolition of fees, the consequent inactivity and languor which prevailed in the different departments."² How far there was anything in this contention it is hard to judge, the more so since, as a measure of economy, the Minutes of Evidence were not published.

¹ Return of the Establishments of the Public Departments and Offices, 1821-1832, respectively, showing reductions which have been carried into effect since 1821, etc., *P.P.*, 1833, xxii, p. 459.

² 5th Report from the Committee on Public Expenditure, *P.P.*, 1810, ii, p. 371.

The early reformers had been more exercised over questions of probity than of efficiency. They rarely complained of personnel. The form of inefficiency against which they inveighed was the survival of procedures which hampered the expeditious prosecution of public business. The enforcement of more scrupulous standards by the unreformed House was a considerable achievement. There was a close connection between corrupt practices in politics and corrupt practices in the public service; this connection is apparent from the implication of high political officers in the financial scandals which were revealed in the early years of the nineteenth century.

It would be true to say that by 1835 the main recommendations of the early reformers had been implemented. After examining the chaotic state of public offices, they had evolved a clear idea of what changes were essential, if public offices were to be adequate to the demands of the times. Once the inspiration of their reports was exhausted, the Government seemed undecided as to what it expected from the Civil Service, apart from work executed at the least possible cost. Yet, if the Service was to adapt itself successfully to the rapidly changing conditions and to the expansion of public business, a more constructive vision was needed. Fortunately the times were producing men of ability, vision, and with talent for administration fully equal to carrying on the task from the point at which the earlier reformers had left it.

PART II

CHAPTER V

THE BACKGROUND OF COMING CHANGES

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century a new phase in the development of the Civil Service began. Corruption had been checked and an attempt made to adapt offices to the needs of the times. Government activity was expanding, and at the same time Parliament demanded that the cost of administration should remain at the 1797 level. Efficiency, therefore, was of the utmost importance. Efficiency depends partly on methods of organization, partly on personnel. As we have seen, Civil Servants were recruited by patronage. There can be no doubt that after the passing of the Reform Bill the distribution of places played an increasingly important part in the party political system. The patronage of places in the Treasury and of the departments subordinate to it lay with the Patronage Secretary. All vacancies were reported to him as they occurred, and filled by him from the list of nominees.¹ The patronage of other offices lay with the political heads of the departments. The Patronage Secretary, however, kept an eye on the way in which places were distributed. Party considerations outweighed all others. There were no tests of the qualifications of nominees. The only existing safeguard was the power to dismiss those who proved themselves totally incapable during their period of probation.

There had been isolated attempts made to devise means of excluding unsuitable nominees. Sir James Graham, who as First Lord of the Admiralty carried out extensive reforms in his department between 1830 and 1834, made it his practice to appoint competent officers irrespective of their political creeds. In so doing he offended the members of his party, and eventually was reprimanded by the Patronage Secretary. The incident is not without significance. Graham had refused to allow political expediency and an election quarrel to stand in the way of the appointment of Captain Napier to an out-pension at Greenwich. In answer to a Member who threatened to exercise political pressure, he wrote: "I care not what people may say, so long as my conscience tells me I have acted

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, pp 90-91

justly; and if I am swayed by other motives, in the difficult and odious task of distributing patronage, I should be altogether unworthy of the office which I hold."¹ The following day he wrote firmly to another Member saying that he considered the best interests of the Government were served by a strict impartiality of professional rewards "All promotion in the Dockyard," he stated, "will henceforth be given as the reward of merit, on the recommendation of the Admiral Superintendent. As patronage I cease to exercise it, and I have made it over to the Board, with the intention of carefully watching its distribution."²

In January the following year came the rebuke from the Patronage Secretary "When I assure you," he wrote, "that I have undoubted authority that the Tories are at a loss to divine any other motive in your recent dispensation of the patronage at the Admiralty than a desire to conciliate and cultivate the Conservative party, it is quite time you should be made acquainted with the murmurs of your friends, and the jeers of the enemy."³ But Graham remained unrepentant. "I have endeavoured," he replied, "to serve the public faithfully, and I never prostituted the patronage of my office to any base purpose. The officers have generally been selected by me for their efficiency, and not for their politics, and if professional merits be regarded by my successor he will have no reason to complain of my appointments."⁴

The episode illustrates the vigilance of the party over the distribution of places, and the difficulties which beset those who sacrificed political considerations to administrative efficiency. There is no record of similar comparable stands against the prevailing custom at that time.

Although political considerations determined who should be nominated to vacancies in the Civil Service, attempts were made now and then to exclude unsuitable persons. A Treasury Minute of 1820 prescribed age limits for the appointment of Customs officials. Another, sixteen years later, affirmed that it was desirable that inquiries should be made to ensure that those appointed had not been convicted for offences against the revenue laws, and that it was desirable that nominees should know how to read, write, and do simple arithmetic.⁵ No systematic test was suggested, and unsatisfactory nominations continued to be made. A Customs Board Regu-

¹ PARKER, C S *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham* (1907), Letter dated September 24, 1832, vol. 1, p. 163.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 164.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ P P, 1843, xxx, p. 587.

lation of 1841 records that it had been necessary to dismiss a Customs clerk because he "exhibited great ignorance of spelling, a very imperfect knowledge of writing, and but a limited knowledge of arithmetic"¹

Although politicians were as yet unprepared to accept personal ability as the only necessary qualification for nomination to Civil Service posts, there were indications that they were beginning to recognize the undesirability of appointing totally unsuitable persons. A Treasury Minute of 1831 drew attention to the importance of recruiting in the department gentlemen "well qualified to perform all the higher duties of the department as they rise on the establishment." It was suggested that young men should be appointed and "kept for a limited time under some restraint by their relatives and friends," and that they should serve a two years' probation and be employed under each of the Chief Clerks.² Probation was a method of eliminating inefficient nominees, it was not a means of selecting more able men. In 1834 an experiment was undertaken at the Treasury which was designed not only to eliminate the unfit, but also to select more suitable candidates. It was arranged that there should be three nominations for each Treasury vacancy, and that the best man should be selected by means of a departmental examination.³ Unfortunately, there is no record of the effect of the experiment on the quality of new entrants. The practice was brought to an end by a Treasury Minute of 1841. Whether the method was discontinued because it proved unsuccessful, or whether because patrons resented the rejection of their nominees, cannot be judged. After 1841 the Assistant Secretary and the Chief Clerk of the Finance Department were made responsible for seeing that those who had been nominated to the Treasury were adequate to the duties entrusted to them.

If the administrative departments were to become efficient, it was clearly no longer feasible to give political expediency precedence over all other considerations. To apply a remedy entailed cutting across a network of interests, it meant, moreover, a reorientation of values. There can be no doubt that by the middle of the nineteenth century the Civil Service lagged behind certain professional bodies. It had not been in the Civil Service alone that considerations other than ability and merit had determined who should fill the responsible and lucrative posts. However, there was a growing recognition of the importance of technical qualifications. The training

¹ *PP*, 1843, xxx, p. 589

² *Ibid.*, p. 585

³ *Ibid.*, p. 586

of medical practitioners was improved in the early years of the century, and in 1815, after a considerable struggle, the apothecaries secured the legal regulation of their trade and instituted qualifying examination¹

Of the many changes and experiments which were taking place and altering men's outlook, those which influenced most directly the development of the Civil Service were the reforms in the administration of India and the reforms in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Remedies were found for systems vitiated by injudicious patronage. The experience gained in these two fields was in the course of time applied to the Civil Service, moreover, both the Indian administrative service and the reformed universities proved to be the training-ground of the men who were later to bring about radical changes in the organization of the British Civil Service. It is necessary, therefore, to digress and briefly to describe the reforms which took place in these two fields.

The Administration of India

During the eighteenth century those engaged in the administration of the territories which were under the control of the East India Company were no slower than their contemporaries in Great Britain to make use of the opportunities provided by their position to make money. Large fortunes were accumulated by many devices. From 1714, appointments to posts in the administration were restricted to nominees of the Company's directors. From the Royal Family downwards influence was exerted to secure posts in India for the hangers-on and younger sons of noble or rich families. Men thus appointed were mainly intent upon getting rich quickly.² Appointments were restricted neither by age limits nor by the requirement of minimum educational qualifications. Neither custom nor regulation directed that the more lucrative or responsible posts should be reserved for those who had some years' experience in the service.³ The patronage of the home authorities determined not only initial appointments, but also promotion. Consequently the Government of India lacked the power of rewarding merit by promotion.⁴ This is not the place to embark upon a description of the effect of these practices upon the administration. For our purpose it is the reform

¹ HALÉVY, ELIE *A History of the English People in 1815*, Section III, chap. 2. For a history of the growth of professionalism see SAUNDERS, A. M. C. *Professions and their Place in Society* (1928).

² BLUNT, E. *The I.C.S.* (1937), pp. 29-31.

³ KEITH, A. B. *A Constitutional History of India* (1936), p. 56.

⁴ *Cambridge History of India*, vol. v, p. 318.

movement which is important, for the measures taken after 1784 and the discussions they aroused had considerable influence upon the proposals later put forward for the reform of the British Civil Service.

Measures were introduced to check the practices which had commonly been employed to supplement salaries thus officials were forbidden to accept large monetary gifts, or to continue their practice of granting loans to Indians at exorbitant rates of interest. This suppression of corrupt practices was paralleled by the measures designed to stop speculation in public offices in Great Britain. However, other reforms were far in advance of any proposed for the Civil Service. Conditions were laid down which controlled the exercise of patronage. The qualification of nominees for their posts, their educational equipment and attainments, came under discussion. By Act of Parliament minimal terms of service were prescribed for offices carrying certain rates of pay. The Directors of the East India Company were forbidden to sell nominations. Acts of 1784 and 1793 fixed age limits for those to be appointed to writerships.¹ A few years later a discussion opened upon what qualifications were desirable for the Company's Civil Servants in India. The Marquess of Wellesley, Governor-General, wrote a letter to the Directors in 1800 in which he stressed the necessity for providing a training for those who were to be entrusted with important administrative duties. Servants, he said, were appointed without any test of their possession of the requisite qualifications for their posts. "In consequence of this serious defect in the system of your government, it has been the practice to transfer your servants from one line of the service to another, with little regard to the qualifications for the offices for which they have been selected." The foundation of their education, he concluded, should be laid in England, the finishing touches applied in India, where he wished to set up a college "for the purpose of enabling the servants of the Company to perfect themselves in those acquirements which form the necessary qualifications for the different lines of the service, in which they may choose to engage." Junior servants should, he proposed, be attached to this institution when they came out, "instead of being employed in the unprofitable occupation of transcribing papers, and abandoned to the dictates of their own discretion, both with regard to morals and acquirements."²

¹ BLUNT, B. *The I C S* (1937), p. 34.

² KEITH, A. B. (Ed.) *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy* (1922), pp. 193-196.

The Directors turned this scheme down. They were, however, persuaded that their servants needed some form of higher education, and in 1806 they founded Haileybury College in England. At this college nominees to writerships took a two years' course designed to equip them for their duties in India. At first there were no tests of proficiency. Examinations were introduced in the course of time, after much agitation on the part of the Principal and professors, who had difficulty in restraining the Directors from making their nominees' passage through the college too easy.¹ By slow degrees, in the face of stubborn opposition, the College staff succeeded in raising the standard of attainment demanded from candidates. In 1813, when the Company's charter was renewed, a clause was inserted in the Act making it unlawful for Directors to send writers to India who had not undergone a preliminary residence of four terms at Haileybury. Although this provision was subsequently modified,² its insertion was a recognition of the value of the training which the College provided.

Probably the influence of Haileybury on later developments in England was far greater than can be assessed from the number of references made to it in the course of discussions on the Civil Service. It was the training school of many eminent men, and amongst them Charles Trevelyan, who was to exercise a decisive influence in directing the course of Civil Service reform.

When the East India Company's charter came up for renewal in 1833, proposals were made which were designed to limit still further the manner in which the Directors might exercise their patronage. It was suggested that a system of limited competition for writerships should be introduced. At the time this proposal was made, Macaulay was Secretary to the Board of Control. It was he who outlined and defended the scheme in the House of Commons. Four candidates were to be nominated for every vacancy, and the best selected by means of an examination. "We conceive," he said, "that under this system, the persons sent out will be young men above par—young men superior either in talents or diligence to the mass." He did not claim that examinations were an infallible test, he maintained, however, that those who excelled in Parliament, at the Bar, the Bench and the Church, were generally men who were distinguished in their academic career. "Whatever be the languages—whatever be the sciences, which it is in any age or country the fashion to teach, those who become the greatest proficient in those languages and

¹ *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (1894), pp. 57–69.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

those sciences will generally be the flower of the youth—the most acute—the most industrious—the most ambitious of honourable distinctions.”¹

The Act of 1833 embodied Macaulay's proposals. The following year, however, the Directors managed to secure the postponement of its practical application.² Their triumph was short-lived, for the Charter Act of 1853 deprived them of their patronage altogether. It directed that for the future Indian Civil Servants should be selected by competitive examination, open to British subjects generally, under a scheme prepared by the Board of Control. The first examination was held in 1855.³

Thus measures had been taken to check corruption. Patronage had been first regulated and later done away with, the importance of adequate qualifications had been recognized. These reforms had a direct and profound influence on the proposals for the reform of the British Civil Service. They provided experience of three alternatives to unregulated patronage: first, the training of nominees in a professional college, secondly, limited competition amongst nominees, thirdly, selection by open competitive examination. The second and third of these alternatives were later adopted by the Civil Service.

Oxford and Cambridge

The eighteenth century has been described as the least satisfactory period in the known history of the Universities.⁴ As in other bodies, influence rather than merit determined the distribution of places and prizes. Fellowships had become a form of pension, often granted for life without any conditions of residence or of work. Before 1800 there were no genuine degree examinations at Oxford. At Cambridge, candidates for degrees, if they were neither of noble birth nor of King's College, had to pass serious tests consisting of oral disputations on modern philosophy and mathematics, followed by the mathematical tripos, which had been established in 1747. The number of persons sitting for this examination was small.

In the last years of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth there were signs of discontent with existing conditions. In 1787 at Cambridge a purification of the system of elections to Fellowships at Trinity College took place. This was brought about

¹ KEITH, A. B. (Ed.) *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy* (1922), pp. 251 ff.

² KEITH, A. B. *Constitutional History of India* (1937), p. 135. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴ *Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities*, P. P., 1922, x, p. 43.

by the spirited action of ten Junior Fellows.¹ Between 1831 and 1834 Sir William Hamilton wrote a series of articles to the *Edinburgh Review* in which he attacked existing conditions at Oxford and Cambridge. He emphasized the weaknesses in the Universities' constitutions, in their educational methods and programmes, and he condemned their insistence on subscription by all their members to the Thirty-nine Articles.²

In 1837 the Earl of Radnor introduced a Bill into the House of Lords to institute an inquiry into the state of the Universities.³ The Bill was defeated. No legislative action was taken until after 1850.

In the history of the British Civil Service, it is not the controversies over the Universities which are important, but the reforms which were introduced, and in particular those reforms which led to the introduction of effective systems of examination, and which made merit rather than influence the determinant in the distribution of awards.

The first examinations consisted mainly in disputations. To judge from the remarks of Bishop Copleston, who defended the Oxford system in a reply to the accusations brought against it by Sir William Hamilton, the tests were not exacting. Great numbers of students had to be allowed to pass whose attainments were "very inconsiderable." Only extreme incapacity, extraordinary want of school education, or gross idleness at the University excluded a man from gaining his degree.⁴ During the first three decades of the nineteenth century fundamental changes took place. Systematic examinations for degrees were introduced. The examination results were classified, and thereby stimulated competition for distinction among the candidates. New schools were introduced. The effect of these changes was considerable. When, in 1852, the Commissioners came to examine the condition of the Universities, they found at Oxford that examinations "have become the chief instrument not only for testing the proficiency of Students, but also for stimulating and directing the Studies of the place."⁵ They said of Cambridge that a great majority of the College Fellowships had long been open to free competition, which had given the University a "high moral

¹ *Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities*, P P, 1922, x, p. 46.

² Sir William Hamilton was elected in 1836 to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh. He had been Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1807.

³ TILLYARD, A. I. *A History of University Reform* (1913), p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32, quoting from Copleston's *Replies to the Calumnies of the "Edinburgh Review"*.

⁵ *Royal Commission on Oxford University*, P P, 1852, xxii, p. 89.

elevation," and that the same condition marked the distribution of many of the valued University prizes. "That the rewards of competition be given to the most worthy is a principle now so deeply penetrating the moral life of Cambridge that its violation seems almost beyond the region of thought"¹ Contemporary letters and biographies support the Commissioners' statements

There can be no doubt that the reformed Universities exercised considerable influence over many of the men who were later to play an important part in the reform of the Civil Service. Robert Lowe, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was to press Gladstone to persuade the Cabinet to agree to the famous Order in Council of 1870, which first authorized the selection of Civil Servants by open competitive examination, had been educated at Oxford. He had taken his university career seriously, and lamented his failure to secure a first class degree.² He respected the University, and strongly supported the movement for its reform. A report to the House of Commons on the Indian Civil Service, which was printed in 1855, quoted from Cambridge experience. Pointing out the benefits which the country might expect from the introduction of competitive examinations as a means of selecting Indian Civil Servants, attention was drawn to the experience of Trinity College, Cambridge, at which four Fellowships were awarded annually by competition. "It is notorious that the examinations for Trinity Fellowships have, directly or indirectly, done much to give direction to the studies of Cambridge, and of all the numerous schools which are the feeders of Cambridge. What, then, is likely to be the effect of a competition for prizes which will be ten times as numerous as the Trinity Fellowships, and of which each will be more valuable than a Trinity Fellowship?"³

The reforms in the Universities suggested methods by which ability might be tested. A twentieth-century Royal Commission expressed the view that the reform of the examination system at the Universities "gave to the system of competitive examination a prestige in the country at large which led to its adoption, not only as the fashionable panacea in all matters educational, but as the peculiarly British method of selecting Civil Servants"⁴

¹ *Royal Commission on Cambridge University*, P P, 1852-53, xlv, pp 210-211.

² MARTIN, A. PATCHETT *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke* (1893), p 20

³ *The Indian Civil Service Report to the House of Commons* (1855), pp. 7-8. Amongst the signatories to the report were Macaulay and Benjamin Jowett.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Oxford and Cambridge Universities*, P P, 1922, x, p 47.

Personal Links

The experience of the reform of the administration of India and of the Universities was brought to bear directly upon the question of Civil Service reform, because of the close personal association of a small but influential group of men closely connected with all three spheres

Charles Trevelyan, who, as Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, made in 1848 radical proposals for the reform of his department, and later similar proposals for the reorganization of the whole Service, had served for fourteen years in India. He had spent four terms at Haileybury,¹ and had therefore absorbed the new outlook of trained Indian Civil Servants. He was appointed to the Treasury in 1840 on the recommendation of Sir Francis Baring, who commended to him the task of improving the character of the Civil Service.² It was a prodigious task to commend to any man. But Trevelyan was peculiarly well qualified to undertake it. He was known to be hostile to corruption and fearless in resisting it. Two years after he went to India he publicly accused Sir Edward Colebrook of receiving bribes from natives. Sir Edward was a very powerful and popular man, and almost head of the service. People were shocked, and Trevelyan was abused and cut. However, he collected proof of his charges, and after an inquiry lasting some weeks Sir Edward was dismissed in disgrace.³ In India Trevelyan met Macaulay, who described him as "very active and athletic" and a master at the sport of spearing wild boar. "His face has a most characteristic expression of ardour and impetuosity, which makes his countenance very interesting to me. He has no small talk. His mind is full of schemes of moral and political improvement, and his zeal boils over in his talk."⁴ He married Macaulay's sister, and the two men became intimate friends. Macaulay, as we have already seen, was deeply interested in schemes for the reform of the Indian Civil Service. These he discussed with Trevelyan. He read over to him the draft of his report on recruitment by competitive examination.⁵ Thus the connection was made between British and Indian Civil Service reform.

¹ There he won prizes for classics and medals for history, political economy, and Sanskrit. He went to India in 1826 at the age of nineteen. See *Memorials of Old Haileybury College* (1894), p. 374.

² *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Superannuation*, P P, 1856, ix, p. 17.

³ TREVELYAN, G. O. *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (1876), vol. 1, pp. 383-384.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter dated December 7, 1834, vol. 1, pp. 384-385.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 372.

Benjamin Jowett, the famous Master of Balliol, who exercised so profound an influence on his contemporaries, was keenly interested in the reform of the Indian Civil Service. Since 1846 he had been closely associated with the movement for University reform,¹ and he had experience of the changes which had taken place in the examination system. He agreed with Macaulay's plan for recruiting Indian Civil Servants by open competitive examination. Discussions over this question led to the growth of an intimacy between Jowett and Trevelyan.² It need only be added that whilst these discussions were taking place Robert Lowe was Secretary to the India Board and in close touch with Jowett.³

Sir Stafford Northcote, who was to be associated with Trevelyan in the early stages of Civil Service reform, was a Balliol man. In 1843 he became Gladstone's secretary at the Board of Trade. Gladstone, who regarded the reorganization of the Civil Service as "my contribution to the picnic of Parliamentary Reform,"⁴ recognized the interdependence of the three fields of reform—the Indian Civil Service, the Universities, and the Home Civil Service. In a letter to Sir James Graham dated 1854, he said "In the case of Haileybury we struck an undisguised and deadly blow at patronage, in the case of Oxford we are likely to propose measures which I think are strong, but I hope will be salutary for the purpose of setting up competition as against restriction or private favour, I am convinced that we have it in our power to render an immense service to the country by a circumspect but energetic endeavour to apply a like principle to the Civil Service and the great administrative departments."⁵

Survey

During the early years of the nineteenth century men were growing up with a changed outlook. In many spheres the value of technical and professional qualification was receiving recognition, as a result patronage was regulated in the interests of efficiency. Parliament had regulated and then abolished the patronage of the Directors of the East India Company. Consequently the Indian Civil Service was composed of a far more carefully selected body of men than those who entered the British Civil Service. The reforms at

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Article "Benjamin Jowett."

² ABBOTT and CAMPBELL *Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett* (1899), vol. 1, p. 197.

³ MARTIN, A. PATCHETT *Life and Letters of Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke* (1893), vol. II, p. 66.

⁴ PARKER, C. S. *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham*, vol. II, p. 210.

⁵ *Ibid*

the Universities had led many people to regard examinations as the best method of grading men according to their abilities.

By the middle of the century the organization of the Civil Service lagged behind that of many contemporary institutions. Who was appointed to vacancies in the Service depended on party political considerations rather than on the qualification of the candidate. In some departments attempts had been made to exclude illiterate nominees. Limited competition had been tried and abandoned at the Treasury. If efficiency was to be maintained and economy observed, the Service needed remodelling on lines consistent with contemporary developments. Members of Parliament continued to demand reduction in the cost of civil administration, under existing conditions they were interested in preserving the patronage system.

Fortunately, there existed in the country a small but influential group of resolute and experienced men eager to apply to the Civil Service the fruits of experiments which had been carried out successfully in other fields.

CHAPTER VI

FRESH INQUIRIES INTO THE PUBLIC SERVICE

In response to the demand in Parliament for a reduction in the cost of the civil administration a Select Committee was appointed in 1848 to inquire into Miscellaneous Expenditure. The business of the Committee was to advise what further economies were desirable, and to consider the existing methods of preparing and presenting the estimates for this branch of expenditure. Witnesses were called and examined about the details of the expenses. As Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, Charles Trevelyan was called upon to give evidence on the estimates for his own department and on certain items of expenditure. Eight years' experience of the Service had made him critical of its methods. In answering the questions put to him by members of the Committee he took every opportunity of directing attention beyond questions of petty detail to more fundamental causes of waste. Thus, when he was asked if the expenditure on stationery could be reduced if more paper and less parchment were used, he drew attention in his reply to the time and money squandered in keeping up useless forms. He told the Committee that much of the work done in public departments was superfluous and that a number of offices were "completely effete as practical offices for the transaction of business, and exist merely for the preservation of antiquated forms, and part of the expense occasioned thereby is parchment and paper; but that is only a portion of the expense."¹ The Committee, he said, would see what he meant when they came to examine the offices concerned. Apparently, despite their avowed interest in economy, they were not prepared to pursue this line of argument, for they neither examined Trevelyan in detail on the point which he had raised nor sought from other witnesses corroboration or refutation of his views.

In the course of the inquiry the Treasury establishment came up for review. This gave Trevelyan the opportunity to outline in detail a scheme for the reform of his department. He began by describing the existing organization. There were eight principal officers who

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure*, P.P., 1847-48, xviii, p. 139

were in charge of different sections of the work, and whose duty it was to prepare the minutes, that is to say, the business which had to be brought before the Treasury Board; it was they who were responsible for important decisions and for deciding what matters should be brought forward. The rest of the staff, which included the Chief Clerks and those subordinate to them, turned the minutes into warrants and letters and carried out the routine work, including the copying of minutes, warrants, and letters. They were paid on a scale ranging from £90 to £1,000 a year.

Trevelyan maintained that those whose duty it was to prepare the minutes were overworked, and only able to cope with the continual flow of business by "incessant and painful exertions." They were too busy to take in full the holidays due to them. Such conditions undermined their health. Although the business was done, and well done, it was "with such a sacrifice of personal comfort and health as ought not to be required from any public officers as the ordinary condition of their service."¹ In support of his contention he reminded the Committee that his three immediate predecessors had broken down under the strain of the work and had had to give up after only a short term of office. He gave them a picture of his own working day. Since the recent increase in Irish business he had had no time to read long papers and reports at the office. He therefore got up early and spent three hours before breakfast on this sort of work. He worked at the Treasury until late in the evening, and returned home too exhausted for anything but sleep.² The reason why responsible officers were overworked in this way was on account of the dearth of persons in the department qualified to take their place when they were away. There resulted "a degree of precariousness in the transaction of the public business which ought not to exist."³

Trevelyan considered that the work which he had described as "the execution of the minutes" was well and accurately done, but that the staff which carried out these duties was "overpaid as compared with the nature of the business done by them."⁴ It was not, as a rule, from amongst them that the higher officers were selected.⁵ The custom was for men appointed to the Treasury to start at the bottom, and to rise by slow stages to the senior clerkships in order of seniority. Their early years of service were spent in doing routine

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure*, P.P., 1847-48, xviii, p. 151.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*

work, such as copying out letters and minutes. Such a training did not fit them for the important duties of the higher posts. To put a young man to incessant copying was discouraging. "Feeling he is employed on work of an inferior kind, he learns to do it in a mechanical manner, instead of following the public service as a profession, in the way the lawyers in Westminster Hall, or the active members of the mercantile, banking, manufacturing, and other professions follow theirs, he regards his business as a tax upon his time, and executes it as a task he must get through."¹

To remedy these conditions, Trevelyan proposed a complete reorganization of his department. That mechanical work, such as copying warrants and turning simple minutes into letters, should be done by men earning from £300 to £1,000 involved considerable waste of public money.² This class of work could be done as well or better by copying clerks. There was already at the Treasury a body of men known as "extra clerks," who were not on the establishment, and had originally been employed to help with the copying. They received a salary of 6s. a day and were perfectly capable of undertaking routine duties, which demanded care and precision, but called for no superior intellectual talents.

He disapproved of the system of drawing men to the top step by step from the bottom, and suggested that the more responsible posts should be given to men who had never served at the bottom at all. Gentlemen on the superior establishment of the Treasury should, he said, be employed from the first on superior duties. They would thereby gain an interest in their work, and would become better qualified to render useful service to the public either in the Treasury or elsewhere.

These changes should not be brought about violently, for it was important that the expectations with which public officers first entered the Service should be adhered to as far as possible. Consequently those at present on the establishment should continue to rise through successive gradation to chief clerkships. There should, however, be no new appointments to the superior establishment, which would thus be reduced in numbers to a few persons employed on really important business. When the time came for making fresh appointments, instead of taking very young men "whose education is not finished, and of whose qualifications we have no experience," Trevelyan said he "would take young men who had completed their

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure*, P P, 1847-48, xviii, pp 177-178

² *Ibid*, p 153.

education at the universities or elsewhere, and in particular cases I would go beyond that, and take young men who have some experience and success in life; for I conceive that no test of fitness for public service is equal to that of a person having succeeded in some line of life"¹

Briefly, the proposal was to reorganize the department in accordance with the exigencies of the work to be done; to make public administration a profession in which individual abilities were used to the best advantage. No attempt was made to show how the exercise of political patronage could be reconciled with the scheme for selecting for posts men of proved capacity.

Clearly, if Trevelyan's criticisms and scheme for reorganization were valid, they applied to other departments as much as to the Treasury. Elsewhere there were quantities of routine work at present executed mainly by junior members of the establishment, elsewhere promotion was by seniority, and able men had to occupy their time in copying, and wait their turn to fill responsible posts. The Committee could not ignore the important issues which had been raised. They asked other witnesses for their views. Some rejected the whole scheme. Some supported the idea that there existed mechanical work which should be done by men who had no prospect of rising to responsible positions. Few supported the view that men of higher education or of experience in other walks of life should be recruited for certain branches of the work.

Sir Alexander Spearman, Trevelyan's immediate predecessor at the Treasury, voiced the opinions of those who saw no value in any of the proposals. He held it to be essential that responsible officials should understand Treasury procedure. How better could they acquire knowledge of the regulations which governed the relation of this department with others than by working through the grades?² Young men had to be trained. As juniors they were "occupied entirely either in entering the letters which were written by those who are their superiors, or in copying papers put before them by the chief of the division in which they are placed"³ In the next gradation the duties were analogous. This drudgery, he affirmed, was the most advantageous method of training.⁴ Nor would he admit the desirability of promoting men to higher posts by merit instead of by seniority. A Minute of 1834 had conferred the power to make

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure*, P P, 1847-48, xviii, p. 177

³ *Ibid*, p. 195

² *Ibid*, pp. 203-204

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 203.

such promotions, but he knew of no instance in which it had been utilized ¹

Although others with knowledge of the Treasury were less sweeping in their condemnation of the proposals, none gave them unqualified support ² Of the witnesses from other departments, only one gave cautious approval to the scheme he was J: G Shaw Lefevre, who had been for some years Assistant Secretary at the Board of Trade He not only favoured the employment of copyists, but also declared that their work did not afford good training for a clerk Whilst education in the office was necessary for a few men so that the technical part of the business might be kept straight, he believed that "you would get more efficient persons by taking them from other professions, and other employments, according as you want them, selecting them for the qualities which are wanted for the discharge of the particular duty" ³

When the Select Committee came to make their report to the Treasury, all they said of the proposals for reorganization was that they "were not prepared to express an opinion favourable to the suggestions submitted by Sir Charles Trevelyan for an alteration in the Establishment of the Treasury, which must, if advantageous, be extended to all other Departments of the Public Service, and to which objections made by gentlemen of high authority in the department will be found in the Evidence." ⁴ The report contained no summary of either the proposals or the objections Those who desired further information than the Committee's cryptic reference contained had to plough their way through the large volume of *Minutes of Evidence* It is not, therefore, surprising to find no alteration in the tenor of the criticisms of the Civil Service which were made in the House of Commons. Members attacked the volume of public expenditure without specifying in what direction extravagance lay There was a motion in the House for the reduction by 10 per

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure, P P*, 1847-48, xviii, p. 204

² Sir Francis Baring, who had been Secretary at the Treasury from 1830-39, whilst favouring promotion by merit in the upper grades, did not agree that the work of the junior clerks could be done as well by copyists See *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure, P P*, 1847-48, xviii, p. 426 George Boyd, Chief Clerk of Division II at the Treasury, who had worked in the department for thirty-nine years, whilst disagreeing with all the other proposals, agreed that much of the work in the department could be done by copyists See *ibid.*, p. 204

³ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure, P P*, 1846-48, xviii, p. 15

cent of all public salaries, it was proposed by a Member who had sat on the Select Committee. Apparently he had listened to the discussions without grasping their significance. He contended that public servants were paid at a higher rate than those in similar employment; he produced no substantiating evidence. The incident is only significant because at this period such motions were frequent.¹

Trevelyan's evidence before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure dealt mainly with his own department. Since conditions in the Civil Service varied from office to office, no satisfactory or generally applicable scheme of reform could be drawn up without a detailed survey of existing circumstances. The Government,² or rather successive Governments,³ recognized that something had to be done about the Service, and from 1848 to 1857 Committees, Select Committees and Commissions were entrusted with different branches of inquiry.

A series of small committees inquired into the organization of certain public offices.⁴ Sir Charles Trevelyan sat upon all the committees which dealt with English offices, upon eight of them Sir Stafford Northcote was amongst his colleagues. The committees' reports dealt mainly with questions of departmental organization. A Treasury Minute of 1853 required Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Charles Trevelyan to report upon those conditions which were common to all offices, including tests of physical and intellectual fitness of candidates for their posts, and the regulation of promotion.⁵ Their paper, "The Reorganization of the Permanent Civil Service," together with a letter about it from Benjamin Jowett, was sent to a number of eminent men, whose criticisms, together with the original report and the framers' reply to the criticisms, were pub-

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 107 (1849), p. 408. Another speaker wanted to see public expenditure and the scales of salaries reduced to the 1797 level. A reference to the frequency of these kinds of motion was made in 1850 by Lord John Russell. See *ibid.*, vol. 110, p. 220.

² Disraeli maintained that the discovery of a gross scandal in the Customs persuaded the Government in 1848 of the need for instituting the inquiries. *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 138 (1855), p. 2192.

³ 1846-52, Lord John Russell's Ministry, 1852, Derby-Disraeli Ministry, 1852-55, Aberdeen Ministry, 1855, Lord Palmerston's Ministry.

⁴ The offices examined were the Treasury, Colonial Office, Board of Trade, Department of Practical Science and Art, Poor Law Board, Privy Council Office, Copyhold Enclosure and Tithe Commission, Colonial, Land and Emigration Office, Board of Ordnance, Office of Works, and a number of Irish offices. The inquiries did not deal with the Home Office, Foreign Office, or Naval and Military departments. *Reports of the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices and Papers Connected Therewith*, P.P., 1854, xxvii. The papers include Treasury Minutes and correspondence about proposed reforms.

⁵ P.P., 1854-55, xxx, p. 375.

lished in 1855¹ A series of memoranda dealt with financial questions, such as the relation of the scales of pay of Civil Servants to those of employees of banks and large mercantile houses² The question of superannuation was considered by a Select Committee of the House³ and by a Commission⁴

These papers give a survey of the condition of the Civil Service, comparable only to the reports made at the end of the eighteenth century The suggestions for reform which they contain have dominated the Service to our own times

The Condition of the Service

The reforms which had taken place in the early part of the century had done little to mitigate the independence of the departments There was great variety in methods of organization, and diversity also in the scales of pay enjoyed in the different offices⁵

In some offices work had increased and new departments had been added without any adequate staff co-ordination Thus the Board of Trade, whose duties had at first been mainly consultative, was in 1832 charged with the duty of collecting and publishing statistics Since 1840 it had supervised the administration of the Acts relating to the railway companies Later numerous other offices had been added to it, such as those responsible for the registration of designs and of joint stock companies⁶ The Board of Trade was divided into four departments, each of which had a separate staff of clerks, and even a separate body of messengers⁷ Similarly, the work of some of the committees of the Privy Council had increased without there having been a proper adjustment of the establishment of the office The main work of the Privy Council Office was the management and preparation of Orders in Council and proclamations, work very different in scope from that of some of the other

¹ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx

² *Papers originally printed in 1850 respecting the Emoluments of Persons in the Permanent Employment of the Government as compared with those of Persons in the Employment of Joint Stock Companies, Banks, Merchants, etc And Three Papers on the Superannuation Question* (1856)

³ *Report from the Select Committee on Superannuation Allowances*, P P, 1856, ix

⁴ *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Superannuation Act*, P P, 1857 (session 2), xxiv

⁵ Mr Farr, Actuary to the General Registry Office, maintained that "upon examination it will be found that the rates and mode of pay vary not only in detail but in the principle upon which they are dispensed, as much as the offices vary in their organization" *Papers on Emoluments in Public Offices* (1856), p 56

⁶ *Reports of the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p. 161

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162

departments of the office. For instance, the Education Committee was a part of the Privy Council Office. This Committee employed eleven clerks and seventeen supplementary clerks from the Privy Council Office establishment, besides four clerks and two supplementary clerks whose salaries were paid from funds voted for education purposes by Parliament.¹ So mixed a staff gave rise to difficult questions in relation to promotion and seniority.

Where conditions such as these prevailed, the Committees of Inquiry made detailed suggestions for reorganization. These purely departmental reforms, which raised no important question of principle, were enforced by the usual administrative machinery after they had been approved by the appropriate boards responsible for the running of the individual offices.

Most of the offices examined employed "extra-clerks" to do a part of the copying work. These men, who were not on the establishment, were paid at a low rate and had no prospects of promotion.² The bulk of the copying was, however, done as at the Treasury, by the permanent officers in the junior grades. Only at the Poor Law Board³ had any attempt been made to separate the routine work from more intellectual forms of labour.

The Committees strongly advocated the introduction of a proper division of labour, and the appointment of a sufficient number of copyists or extra-clerks to relieve permanent officers from the drudgery of purely mechanical duties.⁴ The proposal raised questions of principle. Was copying an essential part of the training of a Civil Servant, as Sir Alexander Spearman had maintained before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure? Moreover, how should the extra-clerks be selected? Those employed at the Treasury had to pass an examination,⁵ for it was necessary that their handwriting should be legible and their education adequate for their duties. The Committees advised other departments to make use of similar tests.⁶ On the other hand, in one report it was suggested that it might be a good thing to establish one copying office for the use of all Whitehall Government offices.⁷ A question of this kind, which affected all offices, needed more detailed discussion, and came later within the purview of the Northcote-Trevelyan report on the reorganization of the Civil Service.

¹ *Reports of the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p 255. ² For the rates of pay of extra-clerks at the Treasury, see *ibid*, p 44.

³ *Ibid*, p 229.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp 44, 84, 173, 259, 286, 301.

⁵ *Ibid*, p 44.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp 172, 259 and 303.

⁷ *Ibid*, p 172.

The age at which men entered the public service differed considerably from office to office. At the Treasury and in the offices of the Secretaries of State there were no age limits for recruitment.¹ Customs clerks might be engaged at any age between 16 and 40,² whilst at the Board of Ordnance, where the official limits were between 16 and 21 years, appointments were commonly made at 16, and not infrequently at an earlier age.³ From returns concerning eight thousand Civil Servants, the Actuary-General to the General Registry Office calculated that the usual age at which men entered the Civil Service was 25.⁴ Where official limits existed, it was possible to set them aside by the judicious exercise of influence. Thus Edmund Yates recounts coming to London in 1847 when he was 15, and being put at once on to the establishment of the Post Office through the influence of Lord Clanricarde. At that time the official minimum age of entry to that office was 16.⁵

There was no age at which Civil Servants were required to retire.

From time to time individual offices had attempted to devise means of excluding illiterate or unsuitable nominees. In most departments newly appointed officers served a period of probation which lasted from three to twelve months.⁶ By 1853 a number of offices had adopted the practice of testing nominees by a written examination. The tests were mainly of writing and arithmetic. Some offices required a knowledge of geography and history, and the Audit Office demanded book-keeping by double entry and an acquaintance with foreign exchanges.⁷ These examinations were purely departmental affairs conducted by the Chief Clerk or some other officer. There was no common standard.

Nominees underwent no medical examination. Sir F. Palgrave, Deputy Keeper of the Records, after analysing the absences amongst twenty-one junior clerks for the five years 1848-52, asserted that

¹ TREVELYAN, CHARLES *Memorandum on the Examination and Probation of Candidates for Public Employment Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), p. 87.

² *Ibid.* The paper contains examples from numerous departments illustrating the diversity of practice.

³ *Reports from the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p. 312.

⁴ FARR, MR., Actuary-General to the General Registry Office *Memorandum on Salary Scales in the Civil Service Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), p. 72.

⁵ YATES, E. H. *Recollections and Experiences* (1884), pp. 81-82.

⁶ *Return of Subjects of Examination for those Nominated to Clerkships in Certain Offices*, P P, 1854-55, xli, p. 365.

⁷ *Ibid.*

no private establishment would have permitted the frequent absences common in his department ¹

A newly appointed Civil Servant passed into the junior division of the department to which he had been nominated. The number of divisions varied from office to office, from a minimum of two to a maximum of five ². In theory the promotion from one division to another was the reward for merit. In practice promotion within a given section and from one to another depended on seniority.³ Each division or class represented a different salary group and a separate stage in the slow but automatic progress from junior to senior clerk.

Pay and Pensions

The keen interest taken by the House of Commons in the cost of the Civil Service made an adequate analysis of the prevailing standards of payment imperative. How far was it true that officers received higher pay than those doing similar work in private employment?

There was no single scale of payment for Civil Servants. Offices fell roughly into three categories: those with a Cabinet Minister at their head, such as the Treasury and the offices of the Secretaries of State, where the clerks received from £90 to £1,000 a year, and the superior officers from £1,000 to £2,500, those controlled by a Board of Commissioners or Permanent Head, such as the Copyhold, Enclosure and Tithe Commission, where the clerks received from £80 or £90 to £700 or £800 a year, the higher officers from £1,000 to £1,500, and the Commissioners £2,000, and certain offices such as the Customs, the Inland Revenue, and the General Post Office, where clerks were paid on a lower scale.⁴

If these were the scales, how far was it true to say that Civil Servants were over-paid, either in comparison with those doing similar work in private employment or with the standards of remuneration prevailing in 1797?

Admittedly, the total cost of public administration had risen, for the Government was continually undertaking new duties. It had undertaken the supervision of Poor Law Administration in 1834,

¹ He reckoned that the total loss amounted for the period to 1,799 working days

² *Papers on Emoluments in Public Offices* (1856), p. 68. On p. 75 there is a table analysing the divisions of eleven public offices, and showing the relation of these to the number and salaries of the staff.

³ *The Reorganization of the Permanent Civil Service*, P.P., 1854, xxvii, pp. 18-19.

⁴ FARR, MR., Actuary to the General Registry Office. *Remarks on the Scales of Salaries in the Civil Service. Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), p. 68.

the inspection of factories in 1835, and recently also the encouragement of education. Consequently new offices had been created, and new functions had been assigned to existing departments. In two memoranda attention was drawn to the changes which had taken place in the manner in which Civil Servants were paid. Since 1797 fees and perquisites had been abolished. Because salaries were fixed, whereas fees increased with the expansion of population and with the volume of public business, considerable economy had been achieved by the introduction of salaries.¹ Existing payments compared favourably with those of 1797.

In order to discover the relation of Civil Service salaries to those paid in private concerns, comparisons were made with the scales paid in the East India Company, the Bank of England, and some of the great mercantile houses. From this comparative evidence Sir Charles Trevelyan concluded that those filling responsible posts in public offices were by no means over-paid.² On the other hand, routine work and copying was much more cheaply done in private establishments, where low-paid workers were employed to carry out these duties.³ Neither those employed in the Bank of England nor those employed by the East India Company suffered deductions from their salaries to pay for their pensions, as did Civil Servants.

Thus the general charge of overpayment was not substantiated, particularly so far as concerned higher officials, although there were directions in which the accusation of extravagance could be supported—in particular it was clear that routine work was executed in the Civil Service by far more highly paid men than was similar work in private establishments. The detailed investigations gave no support to the favourite parliamentary contention that there was a case for reducing all Civil Service salaries by 10 per cent.

Criticisms and Schemes for Reform

The reports on particular offices contained recommendations for improvements in methods of organization. The importance of the division of labour was stressed. Suitable ages for recruitment were recommended.⁴ The individual difficulties of the different offices

¹ Memoranda Nos. 5 and 6 *Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), pp. 21–22. ² *Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), pp. 3 and 6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ The age limits suggested were for the Poor Law Board, the Board of Trade, and the Copyhold and Enclosure Commission, 18–25, for the Board of Ordnance, 17–23, for the Privy Council Office, 20–25. No specific recommendations were made for the Treasury nor for the Colonial Office. See *Report of the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices*, P.P., 1854, xxvii, pp. 236, 173, 287, 313 and 259.

were considered. It was clear from the inquiries that, despite the differences in conditions between the different departments, there were many problems confronting all of them alike.

In their report on the organization of the Civil Service, Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Charles Trevelyan were unsparing in their criticism. They were dissatisfied with the quality of the personnel. The public service, they affirmed, attracted "the unambitious, and the indolent or incapable"¹ The reasons for this lay both in the existing methods of recruitment and in the way the offices were organized.

Responsibility for the selection of nominees lay with those in whom the patronage of the department rested. To the political chief, the appointment of a junior clerk was an affair of small moment. Consequently he was likely to "bestow the office upon the son or dependent of someone having personal or political claims upon him, or perhaps upon the son of some meritorious public servant, without instituting any very minute inquiry into the merits of the young man himself"² The safeguards, such as probation and examination, which had been introduced in some departments, were inadequate. Busy superior officers were likely to depute the work of conducting the examinations to their subordinates. Nor could the personal factor be discounted. A large proportion of those appointed to a department usually consisted "of young men in whose success the heads of the office or principal clerks take a lively personal interest, owing to relationship or some other motive connected with their public or private position, and an independent opinion is hardly to be expected from an examiner who is acting under the orders of the one, and is in habits of daily intercourse with the other. A public officer ought not to be placed in a situation in which duty might require him to make an unfavourable report under such circumstances"³

The way in which public offices were organized neither brought out the best in those who staffed them nor attracted talent. Whereas in the professions men competed with their contemporaries, and the efficient rose rapidly, in the Civil Service the general rule was that all rose together. "After a young man has once been appointed, the public have him for life",⁴ and this security, the framers of the report contended, engendered indolence. Ability provided no release from the years of dull routine work which filled a man's first years in the Service. Thus, "while no pains have been taken in the first

¹ *Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p. 4

² *Ibid*, p. 6

³ *Ibid*, p. 10

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 5

instance to secure a good man for the office, nothing has been done after the clerk's appointment to turn his abilities, whatever they may be, to the best account"¹ As a result, when the chief of an office had to make an appointment of "visible and immediate importance to the efficiency of his department," he sometimes had difficulty in finding a clerk capable of filling it, and had to look for someone from outside "This is necessarily discouraging to the Civil Servants, and tends to strengthen in them the injurious conviction that their success does not depend upon their own exertion, and that if they work hard, it will not advance them—if they waste their time in idleness, it will not keep them back"²

Since the Civil Service was organized on rigidly departmental lines, a man's prospects were limited to the office to which he had been appointed in the first place This, it was contended, was an added obstacle to efficiency The effect was "to cramp the energies of the whole body, to encourage the growth of narrow views and departmental prejudices, to limit the acquisition of experience, and to repress and almost to extinguish the spirit of emulation and competition"³

In existing circumstances, since promotion, and therefore the rate at which salaries increased, depended on seniority, there was a temptation to secure for young men the advantage of early appointment This was not to the advantage of the Service, for those who were appointed young had necessarily finished their education young⁴ On the other hand, Trevelyan maintained that those who entered the Service after the age of 25 had usually failed in other walks of life, so that "the dregs of all other professions are attracted towards the Public Service as a secure asylum, in which, although the prospects are moderate, failure is impossible, provided the most ordinary attention be paid to the rules of the Department"⁵ He opposed the proposal that the Government should have the power of retiring those who by length of service were entitled to the maximum rate of pension,⁶ on the grounds that the public suffered because a Civil Servant was inefficient, and not because he was old⁷

Thus Northcote and Trevelyan found that existing methods of recruitment provided the Service with inadequate safeguards against the appointment of unfit and unqualified persons, and existing

¹ *Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p 6

² *Ibid.*, p 7

³ *Ibid.*, p 8

⁴ TREVELYAN, CHARLES *Memorandum on the Examination and Probation of Candidates for Public Employment Papers on Emoluments in the Public Service* (1856), p 88

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 89

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 142

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 144

methods of organization were vitiated by the absence of division of labour, by rigid departmentalism, and by the practice of promotion by seniority. For these deficiencies they proposed radical remedies.

They considered that, on the whole, it was wiser to train young men in the Civil Service than to employ those who had already shown their ability in other walks of life.¹ The ages for recruitment should be fixed for the inferior offices from 17 to 21, for the superior offices from 19 to 25.² There then arose the difficult question of how to select Civil Servants. Patronage had proved unsatisfactory, even when combined with departmental examinations. The alternative they suggested was recruitment by open competitive written examinations. "We see no other mode," they reported, "by which (in the case of the inferior no less than the superior offices) the double object can be attained of selecting the fittest person, and of avoiding the evils of patronage."³ They outlined their scheme in some detail. The examinations should be conducted by a central board, composed of men of independent position and "capable of commanding confidence." The aim of the examination for the superior offices should be to obtain the service of men of first class ability from the universities.⁴ The competitions should be held at stated intervals for a given number of posts, there should not be competitions for particular vacancies. They saw no reason why the difficulty of allotting the successful candidates to the several departments should not be overcome. It would be necessary to establish local examining centres for the inferior examination. The examinations conducted by the Education Committee of the Privy Council for schoolmasters and pupil teachers provided a working example of the kind of machinery they had in mind. All candidates for the examinations should be required to produce satisfactory references and a medical certificate.⁵ By these means it was hoped to raise the quality of the personnel.

Having secured the right men, the best use should be made of their abilities. They should be employed from the outset on the kind of work for which their education and capacities fitted them. It was suggested that copying and other routine work should be done by a class of supplementary clerks, who should be paid on a uniform scale in all departments, and would therefore be capable

¹ Trevelyan had evidently changed his opinion on this point since giving his evidence before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. See *ante*, p. 90.

² *Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service*, P P., 1854, xxvii, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

of being transferred without inconvenience as the demand for their labour varied.¹ Thus those on the superior establishment would be relieved of unnecessary drudgery, and could be employed on the more intellectual forms of labour.

"Methods of promotion were of paramount importance. The report recognized that a large majority of Civil Servants was opposed to the merit system. "The effect of the system of departmental patronage," they wrote, "has been to inspire clerks in each office with a feeling of jealousy towards anyone who is supposed to enjoy the especial favour of the chief of the department, or, still more, of the principal permanent officer in it. Constituted as our official system now is, men feel, and not unreasonably, that the recognition of their merits, even within their own departments, is extremely uncertain, and that there is no appeal to any public tribunal if injustice is done to them there."² None the less, they felt that new entrants to the Service should be made to feel that their future prospects depended "entirely on the industry and ability with which they discharge their duties, that with average abilities and reasonable application they may look forward confidently to a certain provision for their lives, that with superior powers they may rationally hope to attain to the highest prizes in the Service, while if they prove decidedly incompetent, or incurably indolent, they must expect to be removed from it."³ The Government should introduce promotion by merit with every possible safeguard against its abuse, nor should they abandon the right of appointing men of eminence from outside the Service to staff appointments in case of necessity.⁴

The success of a scheme such as this depended to a large extent on the adequacy of the examination system. It has to be remembered that at the time there was no generally accepted examination taken by those leaving school. Benjamin Jowett, in a letter to Sir Charles Trevelyan which was published with the report, outlined a scheme which he considered suitable for those to be recruited to the superior offices. He proposed two examinations: a preliminary test to prevent those unfitted for the Civil Service from competing, to be followed by a selecting examination. Tests, he said, should be in those subjects which the candidates knew best, that was to say, in the subjects commonly taught in the public schools and studied at Oxford and Cambridge⁵ and at the Scotch and Irish universities. Account should

¹ *Report on the Organization of the Permanent Civil Service*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p. 17. ² *Ibid*, p. 19. ³ *Ibid*, p. 9. ⁴ *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁵ Although London University had been incorporated in 1836, Jowett spoke of "our two English . . . universities." *Ibid*, p. 27.

also be taken of subjects such as physical science and civil engineering, which, "notwithstanding their immense growth in the last few years, have hardly found their way into education." He proposed that the subjects for examination should be grouped into four "schools".—

1	2	3	4
Classical Literature	Mathematics with Practical Applications and Natural Science	Political Economy Law Moral Philosophy	Modern Languages Modern History, including International Law

Survey

The discontent in the House of Commons at the cost of the Civil Service had led to the appointment of the Select Committee, on Miscellaneous Expenditure. Before this Committee, Charles Trevelyan made two important points in his evidence. He suggested that expenses were higher than they need be, not because all branches of the Service were overpaid, but because existing methods of organization led to the wasteful use of highly paid officers on work which could be done just as well by non-established clerks. When he outlined the scheme on which he would like to see his own department remodelled, he suggested that officers should be recruited in other than the customary fashion. The Committee recognized the significance and scope of the issues which he had raised, but their report expressed no sympathy with the scheme. The series of investigations into public offices undertaken between 1848 and 1853 revealed unsatisfactory conditions. Many departments were faced with similar problems relating to personnel and to organization. These problems called for some general solution, and consequently Trevelyan and Northcote were asked to prepare a report on the organization of the permanent Civil Service.

In their report they envisaged a transformation of the British Civil Service into a profession, capable of attracting the best brains in the country, and organized in accordance with the highest contemporary standards of efficiency. They tolerated no compromise with the existing practice of subordinating the Service to the exigencies of party policy. Throughout the report they concentrated

on making the administrative machine efficient for the purposes for which it existed. Their scheme reflected the influence of contemporary reforms and experiments in other fields.

In 1853 Parliament had deprived the directors of the East India Company of their patronage in the interests of the better administration of India, it was now suggested that Members should abandon their own rights of patronage in the interests of the better administration of Great Britain. Recruitment by open competitive examination had already been accepted in principle for the Indian Civil Service. By proposing in 1854 a similar scheme for the British Civil Service, Trevelyan and his colleague were advocating the adoption of an expedient the practical value of which had yet to be proven.

Although the substitution of examinations for patronage was the most controversial part of the scheme, there were other proposals of almost equal importance. The value of the principle of the division of labour was already recognized in the economic field. Now it was suggested that it should be applied to the Civil Service. It was undoubtedly extravagant to employ highly paid officers on the permanent establishment on work which could be just as well done by low-paid unestablished copyists. The adoption of this rational method of organization involved a reduction in the numbers of the superior staff. It involved also the diminution in the value of places within the gift of the political patrons.

Finally, the introduction of promotion by merit was to stimulate able men to compete for the more responsible posts.

The reports left no doubt of the inadequacies of the existing system. But the adoption of the suggested remedies involved political as well as administrative changes. It remained to be seen whether politicians and the public were prepared to accept so radical a scheme.

CHAPTER VII

THE COUNTRY AND REFORM

The Northcote-Trevelyan scheme for the reform of the Civil Service touched the interests of politicians, of those in the Service, of place-seekers, and of educationalists. Its publication at once raised a storm of controversy. Macaulay records the hostile outcry in the clubs. "I went to Brooks," he wrote on March 4, 1854, "and found everybody open-mouthed, I am sorry to say, against Trevelyan's plans about the Civil Service." And a few days later, "The news is worse about Trevelyan. There is a set made at him by men who will not scruple to do their utmost."¹

The Treasury sent copies of the report to a number of prominent Civil Servants, such as R. M. Bromley, Accountant-General of the Navy, who had been responsible for introducing reforms into the Audit Office, and to Rowland Hill, Secretary to the Post Office, who besides introducing the penny post, had thoroughly overhauled his department to educationalists, such as the head masters of Marlborough, Harrow, and of King Edward's School, Birmingham to men connected with the universities, such as the Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, the Professor of Mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin, and the Principal of King's College, London to men of eminence such as J. S. Mill and the Dean of Carlisle to politicians with departmental experience, such as Sir James Stephen, late Secretary of State for the Colonial Department. Their comments were collected and printed,² and form an interesting body of criticism.

The plan was received coldly by Civil Servants. According to the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, the tone of the report "had unfortunately been supposed to imply an almost indiscriminate censure of the Civil Service. This prevalent impression has produced an effect injurious to the scheme: the whole class considering itself included in censure applicable only to a part."³ The adjectives "unambitious," "indolent," and "incapable" which had been used to describe certain members of the Service, roused considerable

¹ TREVELYAN, G. O. *Life and Letters of Macaulay* (1856), vol. II, pp. 375 and 376.

² *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P. P., 1854-55, xx.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

indignation. Consequently, instead of contributing to a solution of the problems discussed, many felt called upon to vindicate the reputation of the Service by denying the charges which had been levelled against it. Some withheld at this time corroborative evidence which might have strengthened the reformers' case.

The Auditor of the Civil List indignantly refuted all the charges against the Service,¹ whilst the Under-Secretaries of the Foreign and Home Departments, the Permanent Secretary of the Board of Control, the Deputy-Secretary at War and the Chairman of the Emigration Board maintained that they were grossly exaggerated.²

Sir Alexander Spearman, Trevelyan's predecessor at the Treasury, who in his evidence before the Select Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure had taken up a somewhat die-hard and anti-reformist attitude, offered cautiously worded corroboration of certain charges. He admitted that there existed a few badly organized offices to which unqualified persons were admitted and in which they were promoted, to the detriment of the efficiency of the Service. Where such conditions prevailed he blamed the permanent head of the department with whom he considered the final responsibility for accepting or dismissing nominees to lie.³ This point of view overlooked the difficulties of withstanding pressure from political officers, difficulties inherent in the patronage system.

Sir James Stephen, who had come to the public service from the bar, and had been associated in one capacity or another with the Colonial Office for thirty-five years, distinguished three types of Civil Servant: a small body of men of talent, a number of diligent men adequate to their duties; and a third group, "the majority of the members of the Colonial Department in my time, possessed only in a low degree, and some of them in a degree almost incredibly low, of either the talents or the habits of men of business, or the industry, the zeal, or the knowledge required for the effective performance of their appropriate functions." He maintained that these men had been appointed "to gratify the political, the domestic, or the personal feelings of their patrons, that is of successive Secretaries of State."⁴

The Chairman of the Board of Audit,⁵ and the Accountant-General

¹ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, pp. 405 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 350, 385, 231, 361 and 298.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 399. A similar point of view was expressed by Sir T. F. Freemantle, Chairman of the Board of Customs. See *ibid.*, p. 322.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵ He stated that during his twelve years' membership of the Board not one candidate had been rejected, and only one, who was utterly incapable, was induced to resign. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.

of the Navy,¹ had found numbers of inefficient Civil Servants in their departments. Perhaps one of the most convincing pieces of evidence was supplied by the Principal Clerk of Financial Business at the Treasury. He described how, when he was at the Board of Audit, he had wanted to improve the defective methods of accounting by introducing a scientific system which had been for many years in general use in great commercial concerns both in England and on the Continent. From amongst the department's large staff, he had been unable to find a clerk with sufficient knowledge of accounting to carry out the scheme.²

There can be no doubt that inefficiency was far more prevalent than most people cared to admit. In the course of time there were to be further revelations. In 1860, Major Graham, who had been Registrar-General for eighteen years, gave a graphic description of his staff. On his appointment he found a few highly efficient officers, but some were appointed who lacked adequate qualification, and some who were of bad character. The Treasury had nominated an insolvent debtor who had been in prison for fraud, and another man who attempted to embezzle office money which it was his duty to pay into the Bank of England. Some nominees had been as old as 50 or 60 years when they received their appointment. Some had been physically unfit.³ However, with the consent of the Lords of the Treasury, Graham set about weeding out the inefficient. He estimated that he had got rid of twenty-three or twenty-four men in all.⁴

The dispute over the extent of the inefficiency of the Civil Service was only partially relevant to the main issues of the report. As the Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue wisely pointed out, for a fair consideration of the proposals, it was enough to assume that the Service was capable of considerable improvement.⁵

Opinion was sharply divided on the question of recruitment. Not all those who wished to see greater efficiency in the Service were prepared to abolish patronage. "Jobbing," said the Right Hon. H. U. Addington, late Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, "is a part, though an ugly part, of the price which a free people pay for their constitutional liberty."⁶ Mr. Langen, Secretary for Education, affirmed that since rank and wealth held the keys to

¹ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, p. 55

² *Ibid.*, p. 237

³ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, p. 212

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213

⁵ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, p. 303

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

advancement socially, politically and in business, he saw no reason for the abolition of patronage.¹ Mr Bromley, Accountant-General of the Navy, considered that the way in which patronage was distributed had deteriorated as it had passed more and more to the Treasury. This tendency had been accentuated after the passing of the Reform Bill.²

Critics expressed considerable mistrust of the proposed open competitive examinations. Some feared they would result in the Service being filled by "picked clever young men from the lower ranks of society," and that in consequence "a lower tone of feeling would prevail."³ However, it was not only those who wished to keep the Service as a preserve for a particular class who objected to the scheme. Some doubted the possibility of attracting men of first-class ability to the higher offices. Compared with the open professions, the prizes offered by the Civil Service were poor. Sir James Stephen affirmed that, under existing conditions, a man had to be a sexagenarian before he enjoyed an income of £1,000 a year.⁴ The Permanent Secretary to the Board of Control argued that the best scholars were not necessarily the best clerks.⁵ Rowland Hill, whilst sharing his view, suggested that the scheme might be tried out experimentally for some of the higher offices.⁶ Only four men in official positions approved the method.⁷ The most eloquent support came from those who, at the time, had no personal connection with the Service. J. S. Mill declared that selection by open competitive examination appeared to him "to be one of those great public improvements the adoption of which would form an era in history."⁸ Edwin Chadwick agreed in somewhat less enthusiastic language. Those educationalists who had been consulted formed a united chorus of approbation. One after another stressed the benefit which the

¹ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, pp 106-107

² *Ibid*, pp 56-57

³ Letter from Booth, Secretary to the Board of Trade. *Ibid*, p 133. Cf letter from the Dean of Carlisle, who, though he did not share the objection, noted that it was very generally raised.

⁴ *Ibid*, p 77. Those who agreed with this view included the Head Master of Harrow, Merivale, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, Addington, late Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, and Rowland Hill, Secretary to the Post Office. They considered the prizes offered too low. *Ibid*, pp 89, 318, 352 and 244. ⁵ *Ibid*, p 232. ⁶ *Ibid*, pp 244-245.

⁷ John Wood, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, Henry Cole, Joint Secretary to the Department of Science and Art, Richard Griffiths, Chairman of the Board of Public Works, Ireland, Lieut -Colonel Larcom, Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

⁸ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, p 94

change would render to educational standards, and to the cause of education throughout the country. This attitude drove Mr Lingen, the Secretary of the Committee of the Council for Education, to point out that it was irrelevant to discuss the organization of the Civil Service as if it existed for the sake of the general education of the country. "It exists," he declared, "at least it ought to exist, for the sake of the work to be done, just as much as ship-building exists for the sake of ships, or shoe-making for the sake of shoes."¹

There was a certain amount of criticism of Jowett's examination scheme. Some noted how little science figured in the programme.² Chadwick pointed out that it would be an advantage to direct the examination to the specialities of the Service.³ Many Civil Servants were of similar opinion. Some who objected to open competitive examinations favoured the introduction of limited competition amongst nominated candidates in examinations conducted by some Central Board.⁴

The proposals designed to make the best use of the abilities of those recruited to the Service raised far less acrimonious controversy than the proposal for recruitment by open competitive examinations. Many Civil Servants favoured a better division of labour.⁵ Lingen, Secretary to the Committee of the Council for Education, was anxious to see the abolition of all posts under £300 a year held by persons on the superior establishments.⁶ Only Sir Alexander Spearman, who had risen from the "humblest rank," deprecated the idea, as unfair to those placed in the lower division.⁷

The proposal to introduce promotion by merit received considerable support. Rowland Hill considered that this reform would suffice of itself to secure the efficiency of the service.⁸ Even Sir Alexander Spearman approved it for the higher positions.⁹ Few upheld the Service's well-known prejudice in favour of maintaining unmodified the practice of promoting by seniority.

The criticisms of the Northcote-Trevelyan report contained in the

¹ *Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service*, P P, 1854-55, xx, pp 100-101

² This point was particularly emphasized by Dr Jelf, Principal of King's College, London, and by Canon Moseley, H M I Schools. See *ibid*, pp 65-67 and 42

³ *Ibid*, p 189

⁴ See the correspondence from Rowland Hill, Secretary to the Post Office, Sir G C Lewis, Edward Romilly, Chairman of the Board of Audit, Herman Merivale, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, etc. *Ibid*, pp 241, 120, 264-265, 319

⁵ *Ibid*. See correspondence from the Registrar-General, p 109, and from the Secretary to the Board of Trade, p 130

⁷ *Ibid*, p 400

⁸ *Ibid*, pp 242-243

⁶ *Ibid*, p 107

⁹ *Ibid*, p 402.

Papers on the Reorganization of the Civil Service can have given little encouragement to those anxious for reform. Unofficial comment was hardly more encouraging. Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty, who had angered the Patronage Secretary by his disregard of political expediences in his distribution of places, wrote to Gladstone that he considered the reforms if carried would be "regarded as the greatest boon conferred on the nation since bread was freed from taxation." None the less he doubted the practicability of the scheme. "I am not certain," he wrote, "that Parliamentary Government can be conducted on such principles of purity. Notwithstanding all our reforms, the experiment is to be tried *non in republica Platonis sed in facie Romuli*."¹

The *Westminster Review*, usually an advocate of reform, published an unenthusiastic article, in which it was pointed out that, although competitive examinations were preferable to patronage, they might be expected to fill the Civil Service with conservatively minded men, clever rather than able, who would "stand by and work out all that their predecessors of the same political faith had handed down to them, but who would be little disposed to admit the value, or qualified to direct the use of, new ideas."²

Macaulay noted that Trevelyan had "been too sanguine. The pear is not ripe. I always thought so. The time will come, but it is not come yet. I am afraid he will be much mortified."³

¹ PARKER, C. S. *Life and Letters of Sir James Graham* (1907), Letter dated January 1854, vol. 11, p. 213. ² *Westminster Review* (1854), vol. 62, pp. 78-80.

³ TREVELYAN, G. O. *Life and Letters of Macaulay* (1876), vol. 11, p. 375.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION AND OTHER CHANGES

Politicians, Civil Servants, and the general public received the Northcote-Trevelyan Report with such coldness that it seemed unlikely that any action would be taken. Not many months passed, however, before events radically altered the situation, rudely shaking the public into a realization of the importance of the country's administrative organization. The Crimean War broke out. W. H. Russell became war correspondent to *The Times*. His dispatches contained vivid descriptions of the confusion, mismanagement, and maladministration which he saw at the scene of action. His reports were published without censorship. The public read of the conditions in the military hospitals, of the inadequacies of the supplies, of the high death-rate amongst the soldiers. Florence Nightingale persuaded the War Office in the person of Sidney Herbert to send her to Scutari with a small band of nurses. *The Times* collected money from the public and from these funds and from her private income Florence Nightingale supplied the hospitals with the essential medicaments and with the elementary necessities of clothing and domestic utensils which the responsible departments had failed to provide.¹ She wrestled not only with the physical deficiency in supplies, but also with deficiencies of another kind in the Purveying Department.² She became a national heroine, in whose activities the public took unflagging interest.

The Aberdeen Ministry fell after resisting the demand for an inquiry into the condition of the Army before Sebastopol. On May 5, 1855, the Administrative Reform Association was founded "to put an end to those influences which at present burden every department of Government with incapable officers."³ It organized meetings in most of the big towns at which resolutions were passed in favour of reform. It issued pamphlets which stressed the fact that

¹ O'MALLEY, I. B. *Florence Nightingale* (1931), p. 271.

² She wrote of the officials in that department to Sidney Herbert: "Their habits and honour fix their attention upon the correctness of their book-keeping as the primary object in life." STANMORE, *Life and Letters of Sidney Herbert*, vol. 1, p. 325.

³ *Official Papers. Administrative Reform Association.*

jobbery and incompetence were not confined to those departments responsible for the conduct of the war. It published summaries of the Inquiries into Public Offices, and of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. It demanded Civil Service reform. For some months *The Times* supported the movement, giving prominence to the reports of its meetings.¹

Aberdeen's Ministry was replaced by that of Lord Palmerston. The new Government was pledged to make the inquiry which its predecessor had refused. It had also to carry on the war. These two tasks were at once undertaken. Undoubtedly after the recent revelation of the practical consequences of administrative shortcomings, the situation offered considerable opportunities had the Cabinet been interested in Civil Service reform. But Lord Palmerston was seventy and had no such interests. Nevertheless something had to be done to appease public opinion, and to weaken the case of those whose plea for administrative reform was strong enough to enlist the powerful support of *The Times*. So, by an Order in Council dated May 21, 1855, the Civil Service Commission was established.²

Three Commissioners were appointed. Their duty was to satisfy themselves that the candidates nominated for admission to the Civil Service were within the age limits prescribed by the departments, were healthy and of suitable character, and had the requisite knowledge to carry out their duties. They were expressly precluded from interfering with nomination. Heads of Departments retained the power of appointing to particular posts men who were not within the prescribed age limits and who did not hold the Commissioners' certificate. What constituted "requisite knowledge" was to be determined by the Commissioners in consultation with the heads of those departments for which they were examining. Newly appointed officers were to serve a probation of six months.

In effect, the Order transferred to the Commissioners the duties of conducting the examinations and inquiries which had been undertaken previously by the departments, thereby providing an impartial scrutiny of nominees. Appointment remained a political gift. It lay within the discretion of Heads of Departments to choose whether vacancies should be filled by simple nomination, or by limited com-

¹ *History of The Times*, vol. 11, p. 202. The Editor withdrew support in August, 1855.

² *PP*, 1854-55, xli, p. 396. The three Commissioners appointed were the Right Hon. Sir Edward Ryan, Assistant Comptroller-General of the Exchequer, J. G. Shaw Lefevre, Clerk Assistant to the House of Lords, and Edward Romilly, Chairman of the Board of Audit.

petition amongst several nominees. Methods of organization were not considered in the Order. Consequently the division of labour and promotion by merit, the two suggested reforms which had met with most approbation, were not introduced.

Despite the limitations of their powers, the Commissioners performed three important functions. They were able to introduce a more uniform standard and a certain degree of co-ordination into the tests. They were in a position to survey all those nominated to the Service. They issued an annual report which contained detailed analyses of the results of their work. Thus a solid basis of collected facts were provided for future discussions about the quality and attainments of nominees.

The first report was written in guarded language. The Commissioners had rejected 309 out of 1,078 nominees on the grounds of gross ignorance. They carefully explained the meaning of the term, and provided illustrations in elaborate appendices. It included the inability to spell words of one syllable, such as "shield" and "each" or to spell "his" and "has" with aspirates. Commenting upon the high percentage of failures, they asked whether the results were a reflection upon the education of the English middle classes from amongst whom the majority of the inferior officers were drawn. Since evidence showed there was an ample supply of well-educated men in the country, they were forced to a different conclusion. Those who nominated had no personal knowledge of their nominees, and acted rather with a view to making provision for a friend than with the purpose of supplying the public with a useful officer.¹ Thus they substantiated one of the major contentions of the Northcote-Trevelyan report.

Clearly no further reforms were to be expected until the Civil Service Commissioners had been in existence long enough for the results of their work to be assessed.

Attitudes to Reform

A month after the issue of the Order in Council, a two days' debate on a motion of Mr. Layard, M.P., an active member of the Administrative Reform Association, gave Members of the House of Commons an opportunity of expressing their views on the measure.²

¹ *First Report from the Civil Service Commissioners*, P.P., 1856, xxii, p. 380.

² The motion moved by Mr. Layard was "That this House views with deep and increasing concern the state of the nation, and is of opinion that the manner in which merit and efficiency have been sacrificed, in public appointments, to party and family influences, and to a blind adherence to routine, has given rise to great

There was a tendency for the discussion to be deflected into terms of a conventional debate on the virtues or vices of aristocracy. However, some speakers raised the essential point of how far the expedients adopted by the Order in Council were adequate for the necessary reform of the Civil Service

Disraeli, whilst denouncing open competition, pronounced himself in favour of professionalizing the Service, and of reserving the more important posts for Civil Servants Gladstone, in the course of a long speech in which he defended the Order in Council, declared the futility of any remedy which did not include open competition Without it, he said, there was no possibility of overcoming the Service's prejudice against promotion by merit which they regarded as a cover for jobbery and favouritism. He declared that if the best men were selected by examination, "whatever evils you may incur, you give it to be understood that the men who come into the civil service do not receive their appointments by favour, and have not any other right to obtain or hold their places except the right which depends upon efficiency You will thus change the basis of your system, and by doing so, I for one, am sanguine that you will substitute for the present opinion in the civil service, adverse to promotion by merit, a totally different opinion."¹ Sir Stafford Northcote, who might have been expected to support the reforms with which his name had become associated, made a remarkably weak speech, in which he declared that too much attention had been focussed on the question of recruitment, which was, after all, but a part of the suggested programme

In 1856, shortly after the publication of the Civil Service Commissioners' first annual report, a resolution was passed in the House of Commons approving the year's work During the debate Members discussed the manner in which patronage was exercised. Once more Gladstone stressed the shortcomings of this method of appointment Speaking of the nominations to the Customs and Inland Revenue departments, he declared "If my right honourable Friend were to stand up in the House and assert that, in respect of such appointments, there is practically any responsibility whatsoever, he would be overwhelmed with torrents, not only of his own laughter, but by the laughter of every one of his colleagues on the Treasury Bench"²

misfortunes, and threatens to bring discredit upon the national character, and to involve the country in great disasters" *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series (1855), vol 138, pp 2040-2041

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol 138 (1855), pp 2110-2112

² *Ibid*, vol 141 (1856), p 1425.

The attitude of the House to Civil Service questions was slowly changing. Reform had become a subject worthy of the attention of serious politicians. The increasing interest in the subject in the country was reflected in the articles in contemporary periodicals. The abuses of the patronage system were noted with concern. The author of an article in the *Eclectic Review*¹ was of opinion that place-promising had replaced open bribery in the political system. A similar view was expressed in the House by Viscount Goderich.² The *Westminster Review* devoted two long articles to the history and problems of the Civil Service, whilst *Chambers's Journal* explained simply for its readers the meaning of the Order in Council, drew attention to the value of the Commissioners' annual reports to school teachers, and hoped that competitive examinations would not be introduced, on the grounds that they would put up the cost of education.³

Meanwhile the Civil Service Commissioners carried on their allotted task, resolutely resisting all attempts which patrons made to circumvent their authority.⁴ Sir Charles Trevelyan pressed his views whenever opportunity offered. Before the Select Committee on Civil Service Superannuation, he stressed the extravagance of existing arrangements. The priority given to patronage interests, coupled with the un-coordinated organization of the Service, led, he affirmed, to unnecessarily heavy pension bills. Under existing arrangements men were appointed to particular offices. No machinery existed for transferring surplus officers from over-staffed offices to relieve the pressure in offices which were understaffed. Thus recently the improved conditions in Ireland had led to a reduction in the establishment of the Irish Poor Law Office and Board of Works: there had also been reductions in the Imperial Customs in the Colonies. The displaced

¹ The *Eclectic Review* (1856), vol. 103, pp. 424 ff.

² *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 146 (1857), p. 1468. Speaking in favour of extending the competitive principle, he said: "The system of procuring votes by promises to solicit places from the Secretary to the Treasury was almost as bad as that of purchasing votes of Members of Parliament in the days of Sir Robert Walpole." Cf. statement made some years later by a Member who quoted Sir William Hayter, Patronage-Secretary, as having said in a speech to his constituents at Wells, "How good a representative he had been since he was first connected with the place, having secured no less than 300 appointments for that constituency." Ibid., 3rd series, vol. 195 (1869), p. 483.

³ *Chambers's Journal*, vol. 26 (1856), pp. 103 ff., and vol. 27 (1857), pp. 217 ff.

⁴ They noted in their second report that they had declined to send to one of the public departments the examination papers of a candidate to whom they had refused a certificate. *Second Report from the Civil Service Commissioners*, P.P., 1857, III, p. III.

officers had been placed on the "redundant list" and compensated for loss of office, instead of being re-employed in other departments.¹ The pension was at a rate of two-thirds of the previous salary that is to say, it was equivalent to the maximum rate of superannuation.² Trevelyan said that he had frequently brought the matter to the notice of successive Chancellors of the Exchequer. Mr Gladstone had shown himself sympathetic. resolutions had been passed, but nothing had been done to apply a remedy.³ He pointed out other sources of waste besides. It had been calculated, he said, that if appointments were made with strict reference to qualification for office, "the public service would be better done by two-thirds of the present establishments, thereby making a saving of one-third, and a corresponding saving in the pension list."⁴

These statements were not only condemnations of the precedence given to the interests of political patronage they were also charges of wasteful use of public money. This was a subject upon which Members of Parliament had always expressed themselves strongly. The accusation had to be met. Sir William Hayter, Secretary to the Treasury, and consequently Patronage-Secretary, who had held this post for a longer time than any single man since the passing of the Reform Bill,⁵ indignantly refuted the charge that the greater part of the redundant list was composed of men who had grown old upon it. He made a vehement personal attack on Trevelyan, asserting that though he lived at the Treasury, it was in an atmosphere of his own in which he was apparently uncognisant of what the powers of that department were.⁶ However, his evidence was more eloquent than convincing. He quoted figures to show that the majority of those on the redundant lists of the Inland Revenue and Customs department were unfit by health or qualifications for further service, he failed to explain, however, if this were true why they were placed on the redundant list instead of being superannuated. When Trevelyan was recalled to defend his earlier statement, he produced a list of thirty-six redundant officers who were capable of re-employment.⁷

The creation of the Civil Service Commission had by no means

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee on Civil Superannuation*, P P, 1856, ix, pp 63-64

² The Superannuation Act of 1834, 4 & 5 William IV, c 24, stipulated that in no case should pensions exceed two-thirds of the salary previously enjoyed, calculated on the earnings of the last three years' service. The maximum rate was reached only after forty-five years' service.

³ *Op cit*, Question 408, p. 66

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 138

⁴ *Ibid*, Question 389, p 67

⁶ *Ibid*, p, 139

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-159

silenced those who advocated a more highly qualified Civil Service. The Commissioners' reports, and the comments upon them in the Press, widened the circle of those interested in the issues involved. In Parliament an increasing number of Members supported reform. In 1860 a resolution was carried in favour of appointing a Select Committee to inquire into "the existing methods of nominating and appointing candidates for junior appointments in the Civil Service, with a view to ascertaining whether greater facility may not be afforded for the admission of properly qualified persons"¹ The Secretary of the Treasury and Sir Stafford Northcote opposed the motion, contending that the inquiry was premature. The opposition held their ground, and the Government gave way.

A Select Committee Reviews the Situation

The Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments of 1860 included amongst its members Sir Stafford Northcote, Robert Lowe, John Bright and two ex-Patronage-Secretaries.² They surveyed the results of the Order in Council of 1855 and the work of the Civil Service Commission, and elicited the views of the Commissioners, of Civil Servants in responsible posts, and of highly placed political officers, on the existing methods of recruitment and on possible alternatives.

The position of the Civil Service Commissioners had been significantly strengthened in 1859 by a clause in the Superannuation Act which directed that superannuation should only be granted to those who held the Commissioners' certificate, unless they held their appointment directly from the Crown.³ This provision reduced the probability of departments appointing uncertificated officers.⁴

The Order in Council of 1855 left the departments to choose their own method of procedure. They might nominate a single candidate to a vacancy, and send him to the Commissioners to be examined, or they might nominate more than one candidate for each vacancy, and appoint the most successful in a limited competition. At the War Office the Secretary of State nominated the temporary

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 156 (1860), p. 1194.

² Sir William Hayter and Sir William Jolliffe. The other members were Messrs. Roebuck, Monkton, Miles, Collins, Maguire, Clay, Tite, and Hennessy, Colonel Sykes, and Lords Robert Cecil and Stanley.

³ 22 Victoria, c. 26.

⁴ In the early days difficulties had arisen with the Admiralty, where those who had failed to gain a certificate in a limited competition, but had reached the minimum standard required, had been appointed to vacancies. *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, p. 47.

staff, which was appointed on a three months' probation. Those who proved themselves satisfactory proceeded at the end of that period to the Commissioners for examination. If the candidates passed, they remained on the temporary staff. Vacancies on the permanent staff were filled by competitions amongst the temporary clerks.¹ The political chiefs were at liberty to vary departmental policy. Thus when Lord Salisbury became President of the Council, he stopped the practice of appointing by limited competition, which had been the custom at his office for the preceding three years. The Committee considered the results of these varied practices.

Analysis of the records of the past years showed that, since the establishment of the Civil Service Commission, 91 per cent of the vacancies had been filled by absolute nominations, that is to say, by appointment subject to passing the Commissioners' qualifying examination.² Thus in a majority of cases the examinations had been used only as a means of excluding those who failed to reach a minimum standard.³ The evidence made it clear that the quality of the nominees remained unsatisfactorily poor. Between 1855 and 1856 the Commissioners had failed half of the nominated candidates. The percentage of failures decreased in subsequent years, but according to the Commissioners this decrease was due rather to a lowering of the standard of the examinations than to an improvement in the attainments of the nominees.⁴

Witnesses were agreed that the recently established systems of recruitment had successfully excluded the grossly inefficient from the Service, and that the Commissioners' examinations were far more effective than had been those conducted by the departments. One witness described how in the past, if a clerk "did not quite come up to the test, the bar was somewhat lowered until he made such a jump as to clear it."⁵

Although the departments appeared satisfied with the results of the new arrangement, the Commissioners complained of certain grave deficiencies in the scheme. They found it difficult to maintain the standard of the qualifying examinations. The system of single nomination involved delay and inconvenience when a candidate was rejected; moreover the rejection threw unpleasant discredit upon the

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, p. 111. This method was not employed in offices subsidiary to the War Office (*ibid.*, p. 46). The Admiralty also appointed its permanent staff from amongst the temporary clerks. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵ Evidence of R. M. Bromley, Accountant-General to the Navy. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

patron There was a tendency to attribute the high percentage of failures to the standard of the examinations rather than to the poor quality of the candidates.¹

Existing forms of limited competition left much to be desired. Figures showed that in a large majority of cases competition had been more apparent than real.² The Committee found that the system was a "delusion on the public, and a fertile source of abuse" to which it was indispensable to put a stop.³ There can be no doubt that abuses were often deliberate. For instance, vacancies on the Treasury staff were filled by limited competition. When Sir William Hayter was Financial Secretary to the Treasury he kept a reserve of two very dull boys to run in competition with the friend whom he wished to appoint.⁴ Thus he kept up the fiction of competition, whilst making what amounted to absolute nominations.

The Civil Service Commissioners' experience of open competitive examinations was limited to a single instance. In 1859 they had been asked to conduct an open competition to fill nine clerkships at the India Office: 391 persons had competed.⁵ Naturally they were unable to provide conclusive evidence of the superiority of the system from so limited an experience: nevertheless, they were prepared to recommend its immediate and general introduction.⁶ Practically all the political witnesses and a majority of the Civil Servants who gave evidence opposed the introduction of recruitment by open competition. Many favoured retaining the higher posts as a preserve for a particular social class.⁷

The Committee drew attention to current abuses, and concluded that existing arrangements were unsatisfactory. They agreed with the Civil Service examiners that the best way of securing competent persons for junior clerkships was by open competitive examination. However, they were not prepared to recommend the immediate general adoption of the method. They recommended that only those

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, p. 11. Members of Parliament were pestered by complaints from unsuccessful candidates. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

² Out of 1,107 competitors, 849 had been unsuccessful; of these, 710 were considered to have failed to reach a standard which would have entitled them to certificates had they presented themselves with absolute nominations. *Minutes of Evidence*, *ibid.*, pp. 48 and 337.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴ WEST, ALGERNON *Recollections, 1832-1886* (1899), vol. 1, pp. 70-71.

⁵ *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 223-224, 279. Anthony Trollope was amongst those most hostile to the competitive system. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

who had passed a preliminary test should be eligible for limited competitions, and that wherever possible several vacancies should be competed for at the same time. They hoped that the prompt introduction of these conditions would check abuses. They were of opinion that for the higher posts limited competition amongst five nominees should take the place of simple nomination, and that the experiment of open competition, first tried for India House, should be repeated from time to time for other departments, thereby providing material for a comparison of the merits of limited and unlimited competition.¹

The Select Committee had had to go over again much of the ground covered in the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. In view of the variety of opinion which they represented, they could not as a body be accused of harbouring a fanatical prejudice in favour of radical reform. This made their findings the more significant. There can be no doubt that the evidence which the Civil Service Commissioners had collected had immeasurably strengthened the force of the arguments in favour of reform. Figures now demonstrated the validity of the charge that patrons nominated inadequately educated persons to Civil Service posts. The Committee's mild proposals pandered perhaps to vested interest and conservative sentiment, yet their report was an important addition to the case for recruitment by open competitive examinations.

Introduction of Recruiting by Open Competitive Examinations

The immediate outcome of the Select Committee's recommendations was a modification in the regulations which controlled recruitments to posts within the patronage of the Treasury.² A Minute of 1861 required nominees to pass a qualifying examination before they entered for limited competitions. The Minute did not apply to those departments where the patronage lay in other hands, though there was nothing to prevent them following a similar course. The years passed, Ministry succeeded Ministry³ without any alteration in the policy towards the Civil Service. Politicians were divided over the

¹ *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments*, P P, 1860, ix, pp 14-15

² The Treasury had the patronage of the revenue collecting offices which were subordinate to it

³ Palmerston Ministry, 1859-65 (Liberal)

Russell Ministry, 1865-66 (Liberal)

Third Derby-Disraeli Ministry, 1866-68 (Conservative)

First Gladstone Ministry, 1868-74 (Liberal)

issue. Palmerston declared himself contented with existing arrangements and against competition.¹ Lord John Russell was satisfied too.² Lord Clarendon and John Bright were hostile to change.³ The Civil Service Commissioners, reviewing the situation in their thirteenth report, found that "the conditions which the Select Committee regarded as indispensable, have been imperfectly realized in the practice of nominating departments. Even counting as qualified competitors all who have passed a previous test examination (and in few cases does this preliminary examination cover all that is required for the situation) we find that out of 858 limited competitions held since January 1, 1862, there were only 100 in which the stated proportions of qualified competitors to vacancies have been maintained."⁴ Open competition had been applied to 29 situations since 1855, on 12 occasions by 6 different departments. The results had been satisfactory, and had shown that there was an ample supply of qualified candidates wishing to compete. The Commissioners found the existing compromise unsatisfactory.

It is not easy to gauge the attitude of the educated public to Civil Service reform. Sir Charles Trevelyan maintained that a large number of families whose sons were well educated but who lacked political influence, strongly favoured the introduction of the competitive system.⁵ These upper and middle-class families formed an important part of the electorate, to whose opinion Members of Parliament had to pay attention. Between 1860 and 1870 there was a gradual change in the attitude of the periodicals to Civil Service Reform. In 1864 the *Fortnightly Review* published an attack by Anthony Trollope,⁶ himself a postal official, on the Civil Service Commissioners and on the proposal for recruiting Civil Servants by open competitive examinations. The author of an article published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1860 asserted that the proposed examination system was intended to "turn sixteen thousand places in the Civil Service of this Empire into so many exhibitions for poor scholars."⁷ Neither he nor Trollope considered that the Service could offer interesting work or provide a desirable professional career. However, in 1869 the *Quarterly Review* published an article which not only praised the reforms already implemented, which had

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 172 (1863), p. 966

² MORLEY, JOHN *Life and Letters of Gladstone* (1903), vol. 2 p. 511

³ Ibid

⁴ 13th Report of the Civil Service Commissioners, P.P., 1867-68, xxii, p. 8

⁵ 2nd Report of the Civil Service Inquiry (Playfan) Commission, Appendix F, P.P., 1875, xxiii, p. 558

⁶ *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 2 (1865), pp. 613 ff

⁷ *Quarterly Review*, vol. 108 (1860), pp. 572 ff

"eliminated all dunces and given us as a whole a very capable and reputable staff, while an entirely new spirit of economy and industry had been introduced," but also drew attention to remaining imperfections. There was need, the author said, for greater concentration, fewer clerks, higher pay, and the separation of mechanical from more intellectual duties. He maintained that whilst a pass examination was an adequate test for the lower grades of the Service, the small group of higher officials should be selected by open competitive examination.

As time passed, the experience of examination systems grew. There were some people who complained of the result of opening the Indian Civil Service to competition, but these were few in comparison with the number of persons prepared to defend the new system, and to claim that its adoption had led to an improvement in the quality of the personnel. A growing number of educated men had behind them the experience of the reformed universities. To these there was nothing revolutionary in regarding a written examination as a test of ability. Educational standards were rising outside the universities. The number of "primary" schools was increasing, and some of those who taught in them prepared themselves by taking the examinations of such bodies as the Society of Arts, or the College of Preceptors. Although the influence of these changes cannot be measured, it seems probable that they had some effect on opinion.

In 1869, Robert Lowe, a firm believer in the virtues of recruitment by open competitive examination, became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's Ministry. He wrote to Gladstone: "As I have often tried in vain, will you bring the question of the civil service before the cabinet to-day? Something must be decided. We cannot keep matters in this discreditable state of abeyance. If the cabinet will not entertain the idea of open competition, might we not at any rate require a larger number of competitors for each vacancy? Five, or seven, or ten?"¹

Gladstone favoured open competition, but he had not the whole of his Cabinet behind him. The Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary were unsympathetic. It was not customary at that period for a Prime Minister to override the opinion of his more important colleagues. Yet clearly Lowe was right in deprecating a continuance of existing unsatisfactory conditions. Gladstone met the situation by an ingenious compromise. In 1870 an Order in Council was issued

¹ MORLEY, JOHN *Life and Letters of Gladstone* (1903), vol. II, pp. 314-315.

which directed that for the future all vacancies in a given list of offices should be filled by open competitive examination. The Foreign Office and the Home Office were excluded from the list. The Order was followed by Treasury regulations, which provided for two kinds of examinations. Regulation I, examinations designed to recruit men of university training for the higher posts. Regulation II, examinations for all the lower offices. Thus two of the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals were introduced: recruitment by open competition, and recruitment of men of different educational standards. The order provided no machinery by which men who entered by Regulation II examination could rise to posts normally filled by those entering by Regulation I.

Survey

The Order in Council of 1870 was of paramount importance in the reform of the Civil Service, not only because it reduced political patronage, but because by so doing it paved the way for those other reforms which, as previous inquiries had made it clear, could not take place until the methods of appointment had been changed.

The Crimean War and the disclosures which attended it had focussed political attention on the Civil Service. The evil effects of irresponsible nomination were readily grasped by the public. Consequently, in discussion on reform, recruitment became the chief topic of controversy. The Order in Council of 1855 was a cleverly devised measure. By passing to the Civil Service Commissioners the duty of conducting the examinations which had been undertaken previously by the separate departments, it relieved officials of a tiresome and sometimes invidious task. No doubt the qualifying examination appeared an innovation to those unacquainted with the details of departmental practice. The measure had the appearance of a major reform. The evidence collected by the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments makes it clear that the examinations were well conducted. The collection of data with regard to the quality of nominees was of inestimable value when it came to considering the necessity for further reform. But the Northcote-Trevelyan report had been concerned with larger issues than the checking of abuses. It was concerned with reorganizing the Civil Service in such a way that there might be division of labour, the employment of men of different standards of education to perform different kinds of work, and the introduction of the merit system, to enable the best use to

be made of able Civil Servants. Whilst appointments remained in the hands of political patrons, none of the other reforms could be implemented. The division of labour necessitated more elaborate methods of examination, promotion by merit could not be distinguished from promotion by political favouritism. The Order in Council of 1870 not only checked an abused system, but also paved the way for departmental reorganization.

CHAPTER IX

THE REFORMS OF THE EIGHTEEN-SEVENTIES

Between 1850 and 1870 Government activity had increased, but the administrative machine remained much as it had been in earlier days. The rise in the cost of the Civil Service gives some indication of the growth of public business. The estimates for 1853-54 had been for £11½ million; those for 1873-74 amounted to £18 million. Of this sum only £400,000 represented the salaries and expenses of the public departments.¹ The increase in expenditure on social services, which was to be more marked as the century proceeded, had already begun. Public education, which cost only £250,000 in 1853, cost £1,400,000 for the years 1873-74. The Local Government Board, which first appeared in the estimates for 1869, had doubled its expenditure by 1873-74. The Board of Trade, originally consultative in function, had been entrusted with an increasing number of executive duties, including the supervision of weights and measures, the compilation of agricultural statistics, and the administration of Acts relating to railways and to navigation.² The expenses of the Home Office, now responsible for factory inspection on a larger scale, had risen also.

This increasing volume and scope of business was executed by a Civil Service still organized on a departmental basis. Rates of pay and hours of labour differed from office to office, men recruited to a particular department could not be transferred to others. No machinery for co-ordination existed. The Exchequer and Audit Act of 1866 had slightly increased Treasury control, by requiring that all departments should prepare their accounts on a more or less uniform plan. To facilitate this a Treasury officer worked in conjunction with each department.³ This control was purely financial. The Treasury had neither the power nor the knowledge to co-ordinate the work of the departments, and its relations with them were often marked by

¹ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure*, Appendix 9, P.P., 1873, vii, p. 802.

² *Correspondence between the Treasury and the Board of Trade*, P.P., 1867, xxxix, p. 216.

³ *2nd Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments: Evidence of Sir R. E. Webley, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury*, P.P., 1888, xxvii, p. 8.

sharp friction ¹ Sir Charles Trevelyan had suggested the creation of a Standing Committee on Civil Establishments, to act as a co-ordinating body for the Service, with a Junior Lord of the Treasury as Chairman. The suggestion had been rejected ²

Copyists and other Mechanical Workers

One of the most tiresome problems which faced all departments was the existence of vast amounts of purely mechanical work, such as copying letters, papers and minutes. At this period the typewriter was not yet manufactured on a commercial scale ³ There existed, however, a copying press, by means of which several copies of a letter could be made. The copies were clear and durable. A witness produced before an official committee in 1860 a legible copy of a letter made by press in 1786, when the Duke of Richmond was Master-General of Ordnance ⁴ Presses had been introduced into one of the departments of the Board of Trade in 1850, when there was a temporary shortage of copyists ⁵ They had proved so satisfactory that by 1873 the bulk of that office's copying was done by this method. Gradually their use had spread to other departments—to the War Office, the Admiralty, the Customs and to the Education Office. The Treasury had neither adopted the press nor advocated its use as a method of economy to other departments.⁶

Manual labour was used where work could not be done by press and in offices which would not introduce it. The employment of a suitable staff for this kind of labour raised innumerable difficulties. The Northcote-Trevelyan report had advocated the employment of unestablished clerks, paid on similar scales in all departments ⁷ This scheme had been part of the more general plan for the division of labour and the regrading of Civil Servants. However, it had not been adopted. Each department had solved the problem in its own

¹ There was a prolonged and bitter controversy between the Board of Trade and the Treasury over a reorganization scheme. *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, vii, pp. 603 ff.

² *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission. Evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 366.

³ Scholes and Glidden began work on a writing machine in 1866. Two years later they took out a patent in the United States. In 1873 the patent was bought by Remingtons, and commercial manufacture began. See REMINGTONS *Outline of Typewriter History*.

⁴ *Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1860, ix, p. 128.

⁵ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure. Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, vii, p. 623.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 439.

⁷ See *ante*, p. 100.

way, had drawn up a scheme and secured Treasury sanction. No uniform method of payment had been adopted. Some departments—including the Treasury, Customs, Admiralty, and Local Government Board—had instituted progressive rates of pay for their temporary clerks, others had not.¹ Where there was a pressure of business, the line of demarcation between the kind of work done by established clerks and non-established clerks tended to become obliterated. The work was given to whoever was capable of doing it. Thus it was not unusual to find men receiving different rates of pay, enjoying different conditions of employment, sitting side by side and doing similar kinds of work.²

These conditions led to discontent amongst the unestablished clerks, and to increasing confusion in organization. The Government had not been unaware of the issues involved. It has to be remembered that before 1870 there had been little improvement in the quality of nominees to the permanent service. A report of 1865 pointed out that "every improvement in the qualifications of the supplementary clerks tends to render the distinction between them and the established clerks more odious and untenable."³ Abolition of the distinction between established and supplementary clerks was recommended, and it was suggested that a central copying department might be established, to which all departments could make application for as many copyists as they required, their duties to be strictly limited to copying and analogous work. The proposals were not adopted; the confusion was left to grow.

The establishment of recruitment by open competitive examinations made a solution of the copyist question imperative, for, as Robert Lowe pointed out to the Select Committee on Civil Services expenditure, as a result of the Order in Council of 1870 "it became of the utmost importance sharply to define where the Civil Service ended and where the person who was not a civil servant began, because it was quite evident that if we took away the patronage from the heads of the departments, leaving them an unlimited license to create things equivalent to clerkships, which would be more or less at their own disposal, we were really putting down patronage with

¹ *Select Committee on Civil Service Writers, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, xi, pp. 10 and 16.

² *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 13.

³ *Report to the Treasury on Temporary Clerks, P P*, 1865, xxx, p. 220. Cf. evidence of the Board of Trade before the Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, *P P*, 1873, vii, p. 604, and of the Admiralty before the Select Committee on Civil Service Writers, *P P*, 1873, xi, p. 50.

one hand and setting it up with the other”¹ To meet this situation an Order in Council was issued in 1871, which rigidly defined the terms on which unestablished clerks might be employed, and was applicable to existing employees as well as to those to be engaged in the future Henceforward unestablished clerks were to be known as “writers” they were to be paid at a uniform rate of 10d. an hour Privileges of sick pay and leave were abolished All writers were to be examined by the Civil Service Commissioners, and were liable to serve in any department where their services were required Writers who had been certified by the Civil Service Commissioners, and had served in some one department for a given period, might remain there as long as their services were needed, and they were to be paid the same rate of wages which they had received in June 1870 Others had the choice of keeping their jobs at the rate of wages they were getting in August 1871, of accepting a gratuity and retiring, or of accepting a gratuity and working at the new rates.²

Apparently this Order in Council was issued without consultation with the departments It caused particular consternation where the unestablished staff had been paid on progressive rates which rose to a maximum of £3 a week The Permanent Secretary of the Board of Trade, an advocate of progressive payment, complained that you could not get good work from men paid at 10d. an hour, and without prospects,³ whilst the Chancellor of the Exchequer argued that it was not good work you wanted from them, but plain copying and arithmetic⁴

The writers were aggrieved and indignant They conferred together and formed an Association⁵ Mr Otway took up their cause in the House of Commons He moved a resolution for an inquiry⁶ The resolution was carried, and in 1873 a Select Committee was set up, with himself as Chairman, to “inquire whether writers appointed before August 1871 suffered any injustice by the cessation of progressive payment”

¹ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, vii, p. 661

² *Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Writers, P P*, 1873, xi, p. 3

³ *Ibid*, p. 36

⁴ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, vii, p. 667.

⁵ *Select Committee on Civil Service Writers Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, xi, p. 53 There is an account of the history of the episode from a writer's point of view, in which the author claims that writers were asked to do almost identical work with that of the established clerks See MARVIN, C. *Our Public Offices* (1879), p. 74

⁶ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 216 (1873), p. 842.

As a result of the agitation and the inquiry, the writers secured far better terms than men whose expectations had been limited to £3 a week could have hoped for¹ Two-thirds of the temporary staff became permanent, thereby acquiring the right to superannuation. The remainder was compensated and allowed to remain on as writers at a wage of 30s a week. If an injustice had been done, it had been lavishly remedied.

Two factors contributed to complicate the situation. As a result of the breakdown in the division of labour, writers had been employed on work which was supposed to be done only by established clerks. The Accountant-General of the Navy said in evidence that in his department work was interchangeable between writers and clerks up to seven years' standing.² The Permanent Under-Secretary to the Colonial Office gave analogous evidence.³ On the other hand the content of the Order in Council took Heads of Departments by surprise. It was a difficult predicament, but the solution adopted was neither economical, nor did it help to solve the problems of organisation which faced the Service. Thoroughgoing reorganization was required.

In 1873 a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into Civil Services expenditure. Much evidence was taken on the subjects of recruitment and reorganization. Their report gave lukewarm approval to the principle of recruitment by open competitive examination. The Committee were of opinion that efficiency depended on a proper system of promotion. They did not advocate the division of labour, on the grounds that the "artificial division of an establishment of an office is likely to be objectionable as interfering with the freedom of promotion by merit."⁴ Nor did they favour measures calculated to break down existing departmentalism. They recommended that examinations should be used for recruiting Civil Servants to particular offices, and that all entrants to an office should be placed on a footing of equality.⁵

The tone of these recommendations was reactionary. They neither forwarded the reforms advocated in the Northcote-Trevelyan report nor offered alternative solutions to the existing state of confusion and disunity. They amounted to little more than a tepid sanction of the Order in Council of 1870, coupled with a refutation

¹ This view was strongly expressed before the Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, *op cit*, pp. 608 and 617.

² *Select Committee on Civil Service Writers*, P P, 1873, vii, p. 597.

³ *3rd Report from the Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure*, P P, 1873, vii, p. 414.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 50.

⁵ *Ibid*.

of the validity of the principle of division of labour. The existing situation called for more thorough investigation and more constructive recommendations.

The Playfair Commission ✓

Thus it was that in 1874 a Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Lyon Playfair, to inquire into the condition of the Civil Service. The majority of the Commissioners were Civil Servants. The terms of reference recommended four points for especial consideration: the methods of recruitment; the principles which should govern the transfer of men from one office to another, particularly where the revision of an establishment led to the services of some officers becoming redundant, the possibility of grading the Service as a whole, so as to obviate the inconveniences which resulted from differences of pay in different departments, the system under which it was desirable to employ writers or other persons for duties less responsible than those usually assigned to established clerks. Thus the Commissioners were both to review the conditions established by the Orders in Council of 1870 and 1871 and to consider what fresh measures were desirable. Evidence was taken from the representatives of different groups of officials—such as from clerks in the clearing-house branch of the Receiver and Accountant-General's Department of the Post Office, and from the Naval Department of the Admiralty, from representatives of organizations of clerks, such as Mr Bamford, Secretary to the Civil Service Salaries Increases Movement, from political heads of departments, such as Robert Lowe, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had been largely responsible for recent reforms. The special feature, therefore, of the Playfair Commission was that it was predominantly a professional body, taking evidence from those nearly concerned with the day-to-day work of the Civil Service.

The Report described the difficulties and discontents which had arisen on account of the piecemeal reforms of the previous years. The Service was composed of men recruited in a variety of ways: by nomination, by limited competition, by open competition. The differences in rates of pay and methods of organization which prevailed from office to office gave rise to numberless difficulties. When the recent Order in Council had made it necessary for departments to classify their staff, some had chosen to recruit under Regulation II only, that is, men on the lower salary scales who had passed the simpler examinations, some had secured Regulation I salaries for

many of their clerks. Of two clerks passing the same examinations, one might find himself in an office of high pay and quick promotion, and the other in an office where contrary conditions prevailed. In one office a man paid on Regulation II scales might be doing work as responsible and as difficult as that done in another office by a clerk paid on Regulation I scale. Pressure of business had led to more work being given to the unestablished clerks. None of the attempts at regrading had been successful. Nevertheless the Commission found that the division of labour, though beset with difficulties, was the key to the situation.¹ They confirmed earlier surveys in finding that the amount of simple routine work was great in relation to work of a higher order. Where an inadequate division of labour existed, the routine work in no way fitted men for filling later posts of responsibility and discretion. Routine work was apt to encourage them to degenerate into "mere machines, and to become incapable of the exercise of higher qualities. The routine work in which they have been so long engaged, and with which they are so familiar, appears to them to be the end instead of merely the means to the end. They cannot distinguish and separate the substance from the form in which it has been presented to their minds, and the result is that a large number of the general body of Clerks are not qualified to fill the higher posts in the Service."²

Civil Servants complained that, under existing conditions, all had a presumptive right to promotion, but few any real prospect of rising to the class above them. The Commissioners were of opinion that this grievance could only be met "either by paying extravagantly for inferior work, which is, of course, out of the question, or by distinguishing the work and pay so that the mass of the inferior work may be entrusted to a class of men to whom comparatively low salaries will be an object, so that all those who do superior work may have a fair prospect of increase of pay and promotion.

"Unless, therefore, some division of labour and of pay can be effected, it is impossible to establish either any general system of testing efficiency, or any system of pay or promotion which will stimulate and reward efficiency, or remove grounds for discontent."³

The Commissioners considered that, on the whole, the best method of recruitment was by open competitive examinations. To facilitate the regrading of the Service, they proposed the creation of two divisions: a Higher Division which should be a small body recruited

¹ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 14

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

from men between the ages of 18 and 23, who had received a public school or university education, a lower division, recruited from men between the ages of 17 and 20 who had received an ordinary commercial education¹

For the Higher Division they proposed salaries beginning at £100 a year and rising to £400, with opportunities for extra or "duty" pay amounting to from £50 to £200 a year. They were of opinion that Lower Division pay should only exceed the market rate for that class of labour by as much as would ensure attracting the best of it. Excessive remuneration attracted men of a class that was employed outside on higher work, and who were capable of doing more than was required. Such conditions led to discontent.² They therefore proposed a scale beginning at £80 a year, and rising by triennial increments to £200 a year.³

The Commission advised that administrative or staff officers should be chosen from those promoted within the Service, or from outside.

There remained the question of the work hitherto executed by non-established clerks. One thousand two hundred writers were employed at the time when the inquiry took place. Since 1870 a new class of unestablished clerk had also come into being—the boy writers. Boys between the ages of 14 and 18 were employed at wages which started at 12s a week and rose by annual increments of 1s a week until the age limit was reached.⁴ Both these groups had to be considered.

Robert Lowe generously admitted the mistakes which had been made in the creation of the Writer class. "I am bound to say," he said, "having had a great deal to do with it, that the whole plan is a mistake, and I would never have recommended it if I had known what I now know."⁵ The Writers, through their representatives, claimed to be doing more responsible work than they were employed for. They asserted that only 5 per cent of their number were employed on simple copying.⁶ On these grounds they were dissatisfied with their pay and status.

The Commission proposed that copying presses should be used in all departments: this would dispose of the bulk of the copying. They

¹ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 10.

² *Ibid*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *Select Committee on Civil Service Writers, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873,

xi, p. 15.

⁵ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 158.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

recommended that where it was inexpedient to use presses, boys or men should be employed at wages of 10d or 1s an hour, and that whenever possible payment should be by piece-work. Assuming that the statements made by the Writers about the work they were engaged upon was true, then the total number of copyists required for the whole Service would not exceed 100.¹ They advocated the employment of boys. A normal boy early in his career did more than half a man's work and received less than half a man's pay, whilst the best boys did more work than a man.² They stressed the importance of restricting the work entrusted to this grade of worker to copying and equivalent tasks: all other forms of routine work was to be done by the Lower Division. They proposed that competent men of the old Writer class who had been employed before 1870, should be drafted into the Lower Division at their present rates of pay, and that the remainder should be compensated and dismissed. Those engaged after 1870 were to be called "copyists." Thus it was hoped that the confusion which had grown up during the past years would at length be straightened out.

The grading of the Service and the introduction of uniform rates of pay to operate in all offices, removed the existing obstacles to transfers. The Commissioners stressed the advantages which would accrue from Civil Servants having experience of more than one office.

They advocated that within each grade, promotion should be by merit. There remained the question of promotion from grade to grade. The conditions established by the Order in Council of 1870 had made this kind of promotion difficult. Nor was this unintentional. Lowe in his evidence before the Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure said, "I feel that there is a great difficulty, and in fact, an impossibility in promoting a gentleman from the assistant division to the first upper division." He considered education important from the "status it gives a man in dealing with the world when representing the office." Consequently, the only avenue to promotion which he had left open was the right to compete in the open competitive examination. "I think they ought to be allowed to compete," he said, "but I do not think the limit of age ought to be relaxed, I think such a thing ought not to be encouraged, because, when a man gets into an office, his duty is to learn his business in it, and to be content with what he has got, and not to be taking up his time in trying to

¹ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 20

² *Ibid*, p. 15

get higher, I should not at all encourage the notion of clerks going from the second into the first class ”¹

The Commissioners did not approve of casting the Service in so rigid a mould. One of them said later that he considered this rigidity one of the gravest defects of Lowe’s scheme.² On the other hand, it was important so to safeguard promotion that it should not be looked upon as a right, as the legitimate expectation of all Civil Servants. They suggested that no promotion should take place from grade to grade without recommendation from the Head of the Department, sanction from the Treasury, and a certificate from the Civil Service Commissioners.³

Lack of co-ordination was to be surmounted by strengthening the position of the Treasury. “We are of opinion,” the Commission reported, “that the position of that Department in relation to other Departments should be made as strong as possible that it ought to have the means of making itself accurately acquainted with the wants and conditions of other Departments, that it should thus, whilst acquiring their confidence, be able to exercise an efficient and intelligent control ”⁴

The Commissioners gravely considered one topic which had come before no previous Civil Service Inquiry—the employment of women. For some considerable time women had been employed in the telegraph department.⁵ When in 1870 the telegraph system passed to the Controller of the Post Office, women became for the first time Civil Servants.⁶ Much evidence was taken about women clerks. Miss Gertrude Jane King, Secretary to the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, described the attempts her Society was making to find clerical employment for women. The Commissioners found that women were well qualified for clerical work “of a less important character” and were satisfied with a lower rate of pay than men employed on similar work. They saw no reason why the employment of women clerks should not be extended to other departments than the Post Office, where the circumstances would admit.⁷

¹ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, Minutes of Evidence, P.P.*, 1873, vii, p. 664.

² *2nd Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, Evidence of Sir T. H. Farrer, P.P.*, 1888, xxvii, p. 379.

³ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P.P.*, 1875, xiii, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵ There had been 1,931 of them in 1861, and 3,314 in 1871. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁶ MARTINDALE, HILDA *Women Servants of the State* (1938), p. 15. The first chapter of this book gives an entertaining summary of the evidence taken about women before the Playfair Commission.

⁷ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, P.P.*, 1875, xiii, p. 18.

Thus briefly, the report envisaged a carefully graded service, recruited by open competitive examinations, a service in which officers could be transferred without difficulty from one department to another. It advocated once more, and with different emphasis and detail, the principles laid down in the Northcote-Trevelyan report. There were certain divergencies. The Playfair Commissioners proposed a somewhat elaborate method of recruiting the Higher Division which entailed a preliminary qualifying examination taken at the age of 17 to be followed some years later by a competitive examination.¹ Moreover, they wished to leave to the departments a limited discretion in the choice of recruits, and therefore suggested that successful candidates should form a panel from which a choice might be made by the departments. Similarly, candidates were to be left a margin of choice, and the refusal of a particular appointment was not to disqualify them from other posts in the Service. The suggestion that staff and administrative officers should be drawn from outside the Service was contrary to the recommendation of the Northcote-Trevelyan report.

Outcome of the Playfair Recommendations

Gladstone's Government fell before the Playfair Commission finished its work. Sir Stafford Northcote became Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Conservative Government. On reading the preliminary draft of the Commission's report, he wrote to Lyon Playfair that he considered the changes proposed sweeping, and in some respects reactionary. "Precipitate action," he said, "has, I think, already done harm in this matter, and, though I do not advocate delay, I am most anxious that what is now to be done should be done with deliberation, so that it may be, as far as possible, final in its character . . . Mistakes have, no doubt, been made in the course of the various changes since 1853, some, perhaps, as the result of errors or defects in the measures originally recommended by Sir Charles Trevelyan and myself: others, as I venture to think, from an imperfect appreciation of our recommendations, or from difficulties which prevented them from being thoroughly acted upon. But on the whole, I think very great progress has been made in administrative reform. . . ."² He might well have added that the main source of difficulty was the piecemeal and half-hearted application of remedies intended to be introduced wholeheartedly and concurrently.

¹ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission*, P P, 1875, xxiii, p. 10

² *Ibid.*, p. 25

An Order in Council of 1876 embodied those reforms which the Government of the day was prepared to implement. The most important clause in the Order was that which created the Lower Division of the Civil Service, which was to be constituted of men clerks and boys "engaged to serve in any department of the State to which they may, from time to time, be appointed or transferred"¹ The Order did not apply to existing clerks, but in any schemes for reorganization or for staff increases provision was to be made for the introduction of Lower Division clerks. Recruitment was to be by open competitive examination, for boys between the ages of 15 and 17, for men between the ages of 17 and 20. No boys were to be retained after the age of 19, but there were to be a limited number of places for which boys might compete amongst themselves. Two rates of pay were recognized. For offices which worked six hours a day a scale of £80 a year, rising by triennial increments of £15 to £200. For offices which worked seven hours a day, £90 rising similarly to £250. There were to be opportunities for extra pay for special duties, not exceeding £100 a year. Thus no Lower Division clerk could expect to earn more than £350 a year.

The conditions for promotion to the Higher Division were those recommended in the report, with the added proviso that no man should be promoted until he had seen ten years' service.

Subordinate to the Lower Division, men or boy writers might be employed for copying, preferably at piece rates.

No mention was made of the Higher Division, other than in connection with promotion, nor were any new regulations laid down about the selection of the higher administrative officers.

The Order, although it did not cover the whole ground discussed in the Playfair Commission's report, marked an important advance. As a writer in the *Quarterly Review* pointed out "It broke down the artificial barriers which separated one office from another, and which permitted each office to consider that its own traditional methods of transacting routine, of recording facts, of registering correspondence, of tabulating statistics, were matters of national importance, which required special training and long experience and acquaintance with which rendered a man's service necessarily of value"²

¹ 2nd Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, *Miscellaneous Papers*, P P, 1888, xxvii, p. 571

² *Quarterly Review*, vol. 168 (1889), p. 465

Survey

By 1876 the validity of some important principles had been recognized. Whatever the deficiencies in detail of Lowe's scheme, it had established that recruitment to the Civil Service should be by open competitive examinations. For the future, to reverse that principle would be attended with as much difficulty as had been its establishment. The scheme had recognized the desirability of attracting to the Service men of different educational backgrounds. It had facilitated the division of labour. The Order in Council of 1876 had created for the first time a grade of Civil Servants common to the whole Service, thereby breaking down that strong departmentalism which was the heritage of the past. It would not be an exaggeration to assert that by 1876 the British Civil Service had acquired some of those distinctive features which are characteristic of it to-day.

Much remained to be done. The regulations detailed in the Order in Council had still to be applied within each department. The Higher Division was still organized on a departmental basis. No agreement had been reached on the best method of selecting men for the higher administrative posts.

For the next ten years the country and the Service was left to digest the reforms already initiated. Meanwhile new problems were cropping up. The scope of Government activity continued to expand. New techniques were coming into use. The administrative machine needed to adapt itself to changing conditions, as well as to assimilate the changes lately brought about.

CHAPTER X

CONSOLIDATION

The introduction of recruitment to the Civil Service by open competitive examination was of great political, administrative and social significance. Before describing the further evolution of the Service, it is well to take stock of the situation. It must not be imagined that at this period all posts were exempt from patronage, nor that political influence played no part in the distribution of places. There was no competition for professional posts in the Service, such as those filled by solicitors, nor for inspectorates, such as those within the gift of the Home Secretary. All vacancies in the Home Office and Foreign Office were still filled by patronage. High administrative offices were not necessarily filled by promoted Civil Servants. An official paper printed in 1890 and covering the period from 1869 showed that there was a marked tendency amongst Cabinet Ministers to bestow lucrative Civil Service appointments upon their Private Secretaries, whether they had been Civil Servants previously or not.¹ Nevertheless, it would be true to say that competitive examination had become the dominant, although not the exclusive, method of recruitment for the Service.

Thus patronage no longer figured as an important feature of party politics, and Members of Parliament could not look forward to securing the goodwill of their supporters by a judicious distribution of places. It took a little time for people to get used to these new conditions. In the early days of the Civil Service Commission, patrons had complained bitterly both in the House and out of it, when their nominees had been rejected as unsuitable or unfit. The Patronage Secretary declared in 1873 that one of his most unpleasant duties was "to resist the constant pressure brought day to day, and almost hour by hour, by Members of Parliament, in order to increase

¹ Return of Persons (a) belonging to the Permanent Civil Service, (b) not belonging to the Permanent Civil Service, who received Appointments in the Permanent Civil Service since 1869, while acting as Private Secretaries to Ministers *P P*, 1890, LVIII, p. 163. There were twenty-one of these appointments, seventeen carrying salaries of £1,000 per annum and over. The question was raised in the House of Commons as early as 1882. See *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 268 (1882), pp. 1729 ff.

expenditure by increasing the pay of individuals, increasing the pay of classes, and granting compensation to individuals or to classes"¹ Even after the restriction of the power of political nomination attempts were still made to exert pressure in favour of individuals in the Service The Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade said in 1888 that he had been plagued all his life with inefficient men whom he was prevented from getting rid of when his department was reorganized, by reason of political pressure² The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in 1873 that political and social considerations still influenced promotion in public offices³ Both he and Sir Charles Trevelyan expressed the conviction that vigilance was necessary to preserve the ground that had already been gained. "My theory is that all persons in authority are the natural enemies of competition," said Lowe, "and if they have an opportunity of evading it they will use it"⁴ Trevelyan could not agree that the evils of patronage were abolished for ever "because I believe that those abuses are so deeply rooted in human nature that if the existing checks upon them were at all relaxed they would shoot out and flourish as much as ever"⁵

Slowly the new principles took root and gained acceptance It became recognized that the distribution of places in the Civil Service no longer figured as the legitimate perquisite of the political party for the time being in power Henceforward the interest taken by Members of Parliament in the Civil Service was directed rather towards the welfare and conditions of employment of particular groups than to the advancement of individuals Thus Mr Otway in 1873 championed the cause of the aggrieved Civil Service writers. In 1887 the Lower Division clerks, who were organizing a protest meeting, got two hundred Members of Parliament to attend This type of parliamentary interest was clearly quite different in spirit and in significance from the earlier manifestations. None the less it appears to have annoyed the Board of Treasury considerably They issued Minutes on the subject in 1866, 1867, and 1883⁶ They were of opinion that complaints from Civil Servants should be received

¹ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1873, vii, p. 682

² *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1888, xxvii, pp. 382-385

³ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1875, xxiii, p. 159 Cf. *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th series, vol. II (1893), pp. 1686 ff., which shows the persistence of the difficulty

⁴ *Ibid* ⁵ *Ibid*, p. 556

⁶ *Treasury Minutes of 1866-67 and 1883, P P*, 1883, xxxviii, pp. 543-546

only through the heads of departments. Apparently it did not occur to them that this might be an unsatisfactory method of airing grievances. Whatever the inconvenience, it might well be argued that parliamentary influence was now restricted to legitimate spheres, where its operation was unlikely to lead to corruption.

It was not only Members of Parliament who were accustoming themselves to the new conditions, but also the public. The prejudice against reform in the methods of recruitment, so strongly expressed in the early days by certain groups, was dying down. There was a marked change in the tone of the articles contributed to the periodicals about the Civil Service. Some of those who had feared the results of competitive selection and had derided the coming into being of "crammers," admitted that their fears had been ill-founded. In a long article on Civil Service organization the *Quarterly Review* recanted its earlier scepticism. "We confess," they wrote, "that, had we been asked, when competition was first pressed as an infallible means of social regeneration, whether the method proposed would have enabled anyone to foretell the future success in life of those whom it ranked most highly, we should have been disposed to give a negative reply. But let anyone who has been familiar for the last five-and-twenty years with any system of competition on a large scale look back on the results of his experience. Will he not be compelled to own that, on the whole, the successful competitors have maintained their place in the race, and have shown that they had staying power?"¹ The bogey of the clever man lacking in good sense seems to have been laid.

Undoubtedly the growth in the importance of examinations had repercussions on the educational life of the country. There were, of course, those who were shocked at the way in which "crammers" had sprung up, and blamed this on the examiners rather than on the inadequacy of the training received in the schools. There were also some who thought that the Civil Service Commissioners should mould their examinations on the existing curricula of the schools rather than expect the schools to alter their curricula.² It was a period of educational improvement. The growing demand for educated Civil Servants must have contributed something to the movement. W. B. Scoones, the founder of a famous cramming

¹ *Quarterly Review*, vol. 168 (1889), pp. 447 ff.

² See, for instance, an article by A. R. GRANT, entitled "The Evils of Competitive Examination," published in the *Nineteenth Century*, vol. 8 (1880), pp. 718 ff., and one by C. P. MASON, entitled "Examinations," published in *The British Quarterly*, vol. 72 (1880), pp. 367 ff.

institution, probably went too far in attributing to this cause the growth of modern departments in public schools. He drew attention also to the dearth of scholarly textbooks in the early days of the Civil Service Commission, and of the influence of the publication of these on later examination papers.¹ In all this he overlooked the importance of university reform and its effect upon the schools, to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter.² These various factors interacted upon one another, their repercussions on current educational standards and attainments must be judged as a whole.

Meanwhile the changes which were going on in the organization of the Civil Service were leading to changes in the attitudes of Civil Servants. As rigid departmentalism became less marked, and as the Service developed by slow degrees into a more integrated body, some Civil Servants became aware of their common interests. Thus the Civil Service Supply Association came into being, created by a group of Civil Servants in the Post Office, but rapidly extending its benefits to other departments.³ The undertaking, which was at first managed as a co-operative store by Civil Servants who received no remuneration for their services to it, prospered, and when it flourished sufficiently well to suggest paying its directors, it came up against the ill-will of the authorities.⁴ Civil Service Athletic Associations, Rifle Clubs, and Musical Societies also sprang up,⁵ and in 1869 the first number of the Service's magazine, *The Civilian*, was published.

The creation of common grades, composed of men subjected to the same economic conditions, in all departments stimulated the realization of common interests. It was the Lower Division clerks and the copyists who were first placed in grades common to the whole Service, it was amongst them that the first associations or trade unions sprang up. The authorities had not anticipated this development. They were surprised and annoyed. The Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Sir R. E. Webley, went so far as to advocate splitting up the division in order to weaken the union,⁶ a tribute perhaps to the efficiency of its organization.

¹ *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 31 (1875), pp. 347 ff.

² See *ante*, chapter v, pp. 81 ff.

³ For the early history of the Civil Service Supply Association, see an article on the subject printed in 1873 in the *Cornhill*.

⁴ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, 2nd Report, Minutes of Evidence, P.P.*, 1888, xxvii, pp. 383 and *passim*.

⁵ *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 29 (1873), pp. 1 ff., article by F. W. ROWSELL, entitled "The Public Service."

⁶ *2nd Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, Minutes of Evidence, P.P.*, 1888, xxvii, p. 7.

The Lower Division

From 1876 Lower Division clerks were introduced by degrees into all offices. By 1888 there were three thousand of them. They had organized themselves in an association. "These men," said Webley, "act practically like one man, and bring all their political influence to bear in a manner of which we have seen the effect. We have seen very formidable meetings, from a Government point of view, held in consequence."¹

The complaints of the higher officials were, however, directed only towards the efforts of the Division to combine to improve the conditions of their working life. For their work there was nothing but praise.²

The Lower Division was explicit about their grievances. It will be remembered that since 1848 all investigators had drawn attention to the existence of an unnecessary number of highly paid clerks in most of the departments. The only way by which a proper balance could have been secured would have been by retiring those whose services were redundant. This would have been a costly policy. Consequently in many offices there was a large proportion of Higher Division clerks performing, for considerably larger salaries, similar duties to those entrusted to Lower Division clerks. This was one of the main grievances of the Division. They claimed that if they were asked to do the same work as the Higher Division they were entitled to a similar standard of remuneration. Further, two conditions established by the Order in Council of 1876 had not worked out to their satisfaction. Two rates of pay had been established, one for those offices where the hours of work were seven a day, and another for those where they were six. The individual clerk had no power to choose into which type of office he would go. This differentiation amongst men who had entered the Service by the same examination appeared to them arbitrary. Moreover, there was a clause in the Order which allowed extra or "duty" pay to men doing particular kinds of work. They considered this extra £50 to £100 a year a legitimate object of their ambition. But, they affirmed, in the existing circumstances the redundant Higher Division clerks and the clerks of the old establishments held the posts which carried this money, and were likely to do so for years to come. These conditions aggravated the situation created by the very limited opportunities for promotion to the higher grade.³

¹ *2nd Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, Minutes of Evidence, P.P., 1888, xxvii, p. 17*

² *Ibid, p. xiv*

³ These points are all set out in a Memorial from the Lower Division Clerks to the Treasury. P.P., 1884, xlvii, pp. 435 ff

When, in 1886, the Lower Division first became eligible for promotion, the clerks of the Colonial Office approached the Treasury on the subject through the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. They received an encouraging reply. The Lords of the Treasury maintained that although "the number of Lower Division clerks promoted to the Higher Division must always bear a small proportion to the number not so promoted, it is not necessary that they should be an insignificant proportion of the Upper Division. On the contrary my Lords look forward to that Division being largely replenished in certain Departments from the best members of the Lower Division. It will probably always be necessary to reserve a power of direct appointment to the Upper Division, but there are many Departments in which this power need not—so far as my Lords can foresee—be exercised habitually, or even frequently. Promotion from the Lower to the Higher Division may therefore fairly be considered as a legitimate aspiration for the superior members of the former."¹

The sequel to this letter was unexpected. In 1886 all promotion from the Lower Division was postponed until 1890. From the Government point of view this action was perfectly justifiable, for in 1886 they had appointed a Royal Commission, under the chairmanship of Matthew Ridley, to inquire into the Civil Establishments of the different offices of State, naturally they did not want to pre-judge the Commission's findings. But for the Lower Division the situation was disappointing, and it was not surprising that they tried to interest Members of Parliament in their conditions.

Copyists

The other homogeneous body which voiced its complaints was the copyists, as the grade below the Lower Division was now styled. By whatever name they were known, the men who were employed to do the purely mechanical work always gave trouble to those responsible for Civil Service organization. It had been hoped that the Playfair solution would have proved final—or at any rate that the problem would have been confined to some hundred-odd men and boys. These hopes proved vain, and the calculations incorrect. In 1887 there were still 1,497 copyists on the register, and 1,279 in employment.² A third of these were employed on work superior

¹ Letter to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies from the Lords of the Treasury, *PP*, 1884, xlvii, p. 431.

² Copy of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Treasury to consider the Memorial of the Civil Service Copyists, *PP*, 1887, lxvi.

to that for which the grade had been intended. So the copyists were discontented, and sent a memorial of their complaints to the Treasury. A Committee¹ recommended that the copyists should either be abolished or placed on a completely different footing. In the meanwhile the register was closed, pending an ultimate decision.

Unsolved Difficulties

There were still a number of questions in need of decision. Nothing had been done about the recommendations for establishing new conditions for clerks above the Lower Division. The Government had declared that it had no intention of applying the Playfair recommendation to the Higher Division.² Their object was "confined to an extensive though gradual substitution of clerks of the new Lower Division for the existing expensive scales of service under whatever titles."³

Meanwhile, the custom of selecting clerks by open or limited competitive examinations was spreading. By 1884, 84 per cent of the clerkships and similar appointments were made in this way.⁴

The Playfair Commission had recommended that clerks in the Higher Division should be paid on a scale rising from £100 to a maximum of £400 a year, with opportunities for extra or "duty" pay ranging from £50 to £200 a year. Thus the most highly paid clerks in this Division would receive £600 a year. The scale had not been universally adopted. The Treasury and the departments of the Secretaries of State continued to appoint men at salaries which began at £200 or £250 a year and rose as high as £1,200.⁵ The Treasury had favoured the introduction of the Playfair Upper Division into other departments,⁶ although, according to the Permanent Secretary, rejecting it for the Treasury itself, on the grounds that it could not provide the right class of men.⁷ The situation needed clarifying.

¹ Copy of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Treasury to consider the Memorial of the Civil Service Copyists, *P P*, 1887, lxvi.

² Reply by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote, to questions in the House of Commons *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 227 (1876), pp. 485 and 554.

³ Extract from a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury to the Civil Service Commissioners, dated September 1876 *21st Report of the Civil Service Commissioners*, *P P*, 1877, xxvii, p. 576.

⁴ *29th Report from the Civil Service Commissioners*, *P P*, 1884-85, xxi, p. 578.

⁵ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, *P P*, 1888, xxvii, p. xvi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

There were also new questions cropping up. Since the Playfair Commission had issued its report, the use of shorthand writers was becoming more common. Yet they were not as a rule employed in Government offices. As early as 1881 the Education Department and the Post Office had written to the Civil Service Commissioners, asking whether shorthand might be included as an optional subject in the Lower Division examination. An alteration in the examination subjects required a modification of the regulations laid down in the Order in Council of 1876. The Commissioners approached the Treasury, but the Treasury found that the time was inopportune for such a modification.¹ If, as it was claimed, the use of shorthand writers would save the time of higher officials, the question demanded further consideration.

Survey

Reconsideration of the questions affecting the Civil Service was desirable. There was a good deal of discontent. Some of the conditions which aggravated this were inevitable in a period of transition. Whilst there remained a superfluity of Higher Division clerks employed on the same kind of work as the Lower Division, blocking them from securing the posts which carried the extra pay, there was bound to be dissatisfaction. It would have been costly to retire enough Higher Division clerks to ease the situation. There was little to do but to wait. On the other hand, there were questions for which time offered no cure. The conditions of promotion from the Lower to the Higher Division had to be decided. The breakdown of the Playfair scheme in relation to the copyists had to be dealt with, and a decision arrived at on the recruitment, pay, and organization of clerks above the rank of the Lower Division.

The terms of reference of the Ridley Commission, which was appointed in 1886, differed little from those of the inquiries which had preceded it. The difficulties, however, were fewer. By 1886 the value of the principle of the division of labour was generally recognized, it was only necessary to consider further details of its application. Recruitment by open competitive examinations had passed beyond the experimental stage. Although the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for Home Affairs still retained the privilege of appointment by patronage to their respective departments, there

¹ *26th Report from the Civil Service Commissioners, P P*, 1882, xxii, pp. 620 ff. Shorthand was not included as an optional subject in the Lower Division examination until 1898.

was no danger now of any considerable body of opinion advocating the reintroduction of this practice in other offices

The important principles advocated in 1854 had found recognition both in the regulations governing the organization of the Civil Service and in the opinion of the country. Indeed, the task of the Ridley Commissioners resembled that of the Civil Service Inquiry Commissioners who were to succeed them, rather than of those who had gone before. They were not concerned with advocating methods of organization which roused the hostile resistance of political and other vested interests, they were concerned with the further application of already sanctioned methods, with devising means of adapting the existing organization to changing need, with clearing up difficulties which had been unsatisfactorily dealt with in the preceding years.

CHAPTER XI

READJUSTMENTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

The composition of the Ridley Commission was very different from that of the Playfair Commission. There sat on it only one Civil Servant, R. W. W. Lingen, who had retired some years previously. The procedure adopted was to send to each department a schedule of eighteen questions to which written replies were required. The questionnaire covered details of staff organization, such as hours of attendance, age limits, grading, methods of recruitment, distribution and division of work, and miscellaneous considerations such as the use of shorthand. Offices were asked to supply the names of persons they considered would be useful witnesses. The written replies were supplemented by cross-examination and by memoranda on particular subjects.

It has already been pointed out that most of the work of the Commission consisted in advising further applications of already accepted principles. Efficiency and economy depended largely on the adequate and appropriate division of labour, in drawing the line at the right place between the kind of work to be assigned respectively to the Higher Division clerks, to the Lower Division clerks, and to the copyists.

The quality of the men recruited to the Lower Division was such that it was clear that the bulk of the clerical work could be done by them.¹ The Commission found that only a very small number of men of a higher grade was necessary. They recommended that some of these should be recruited by an open competitive examination designed to attract graduates, and that the remainder should be promoted from amongst the abler of the Lower Division clerks. The proportion of each group required in the various offices differed according to the nature of the work to be done. In the Treasury and the offices of the Secretaries of State a relatively high proportion of Higher Division clerks was probably necessary.² On the other hand, it was probable that certain offices would need none of these men at all. Sir Algernon West, Chairman of the Board of Inland

¹ *2nd Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P. P., 1888, xxvii, p. xi

² *Ibid*

Revenue, stressed his opinion that no men recruited by a higher examination than that taken by the Lower Division were needed in his department. He considered that, as in the course of time men of the higher grades retired, their duties would be equally well undertaken by Lower Division men.¹

The Commissioners found that the existing line of demarcation between the work of the Higher and Lower Divisions was drawn too low. Consequently, Higher Division men were filling places which would equally well have been held by those of the Lower Division.² This state of affairs was not only expensive, but also conducive to discontent.

There were other elements contributing to this discontent. When a body of workers is habitually employed on work inferior to their capacities, it is apt to become restive. Sir Lyon Playfair thought that a slightly superior class of men had been recruited to what was required. He took the blame for having recommended what he now considered to be a relatively high initial rate of pay for the Lower Division. On reflection, he gave it as his opinion that it would have been better to start at a lower figure, and rise with quicker and larger increments.³ The Commission concurred.⁴

It had not been the fault of the Playfair Commission that two scales had been inaugurated, one for the offices which worked six hours a day, one for those which worked seven. The Treasury scheme had been drawn up without consultation with the Commissioners.⁵ The Commission had strongly recommended the introduction of a seven-hour day into all offices, a measure which would have been a further step towards breaking down existing departmentalism. However, the Government in power had not been prepared to accept the recommendation. Now the same measure was recommended once again.

With regard to promotion, the Commissioners denied that the Lower Division could claim any "right" to be promoted to the Higher Division, but they declared that they wished "all prizes in the Service to be open to exceptional fitness." Moreover, they pro-

¹ *2nd Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, P P.*, 1888, xxvii, p. 252. Cf. his evidence before the Select Committee on the Revenue Departments Estimates, *P P.*, 1888, xviii, p. 246.

² *Op cit.*, p. x.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁴ The existing scale began at £80 and £90. The proposed new scale was to begin at £70. The maximum was to be £350, and the old "duty" pay was to be abolished.

⁵ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments Evidence of Sir Lyon Playfair, P P.*, 1888, xxvii, p. 389.

posed that a limited number of staff appointments—registrars, accountants, supervisors' posts, and the like, at the time assigned to the Higher Division—should for the future be reserved for the Lower Division

The remaining proposals concerned matters of detail. It was suggested—for reasons not stated—that the Lower Division should be known as the Second Division, that shorthand and a foreign language should be included in the examination as optional subjects ¹

These recommendations embodied nothing startlingly new. They amounted to a useful tidying up of the existing system and an attempt to meet the grievances which had grown up in a reasonable way. With certain modifications they were accepted by the Government, and embodied in an Order in Council of 1890.² The Division was renamed. The suggested salary scale was adopted with certain alterations in detail. The Division was split into two grades. The salary limit of the lower grade was fixed at £250. Those who were fit were to be promoted to an upper grade, in which the upper salary limit was £350. Within this grade promotion was to be by merit. Whether this creation of two grades was an attempt on the part of the Treasury to weaken the Division's Union, or whether it was merely a compromise between the Commissioners' suggested scale of pay and the existing system of duty pay, it is hard to say. A seven-hour day was established for Lower Division clerks in all offices.

A clause in the Order forbade clerks in the Second Division to manage any society, trading, commercial or financial concern which required their attendance between the hours of ten and six o'clock. This may have been inserted to limit the time spent in directing the Civil Service Supply Association, or, again, it may have been designed to restrict the activities of Union officers to out-of-office hours.³

It remained to be seen what would be done about the vexed question of promotion. The evidence on the subject is not very clear. In a paper printed in 1894 it was stated that between 1886 and 1893, 124 Second Division clerks had been promoted to staff

¹ The recommendations are contained in the 2nd Report, *op cit*, pp. xiv and xv.

² Order in Council, dated March 21, 1890. *P.P.*, 1890, LVIII, p. 167.

³ The question of Civil Servants holding directorships and taking part in commercial activities which demanded their attention within the recognized working hours was discussed in some detail before the Commission, and had come up before.

appointments and to the Higher Division¹ The Division, however, was not satisfied, and retained its contacts with Members of Parliament. In March 1894 the question was raised in the House of Commons. A tabled motion was withdrawn following a conciliatory statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There ensued a correspondence between the Treasury and Sir A. Rollit and sixty-five Members of the House of Commons.² It was stated on behalf of the Second Division that only twelve men out of a total of 3,500 had been promoted to the First Division since 1890. Before that date there had been no promotion. The Treasury replied that the Division had no particular claims to promotion, that First Division appointments could not be reserved for them, and that staff appointments would be created as the demands of the Service so required. There for the moment the matter rested.

The Higher Division

For the proper organization of the Civil Service, some revision of the existing Higher Division was necessary. From the time of the Northcote-Trevelyan report onwards, investigators had drawn attention to the unnecessarily large number of highly paid officers in the Service. Time and again these had been found occupying posts which could have been equally adequately filled by officers of an inferior grade. Conditions and salary scales still varied from office to office. The regulations for recruitment by open competitive examinations were not yet generally applied. The Ridley Commissioners did not condone the perpetuation of these conditions. Their recommendations for the Higher Division were in keeping with the principles already accepted for the Lower Division. They advocated that recruitment for all departments should be by open competitive examination, that there should be a common salary scale, that examination subjects for the Division should be grouped to correspond with the final schools in the universities.³

The Government recognized that the numbers of the upper establishments were excessive, they rejected any scheme for large-

¹ *Paper showing the Manner in which the Recommendations of the Ridley Commission with respect to the Civil Service have been dealt with*, P P., 1893-94, lxxi, pp. 475 ff.

² *Correspondence between the Treasury and certain Members of the House in relation to Grievances of Clerks in the Second Division of the Civil Service*, P P., 1895, lxxix, pp. 496-499.

³ *2nd Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P., 1888, xxvii, p. xvi.

scale compulsory retirement on the grounds of expense "The reform of the Civil Service," stated a Treasury Minute of 1889, "though working thus at a slower rate than under more heroic measures, will in no great number of years attain the object at which the Playfair and Ridley Commissioners have aimed."¹ Since under existing Superannuation Acts officers retired to facilitate reorganization were entitled to compensation on the same scale as if they had qualified for full pension,² there was much to be said for the argument from the financial point of view

The recommendations for modifying the existing Higher Division examinations were accepted. The Treasury affirmed their preference for the principles laid down by Lord Macaulay and Mr. Jowett.³ In 1912 it was still to these principles which the Civil Service Commissioners adhered.⁴ By 1894 it was claimed that open competition was the rule for recruitment to the First Division.

The Government refused to adopt the proposed unified salary scales, declaring in favour of maintaining the existing varieties.⁵ There is insufficient evidence to show whether this refusal was simply an act of prejudice or whether there were rational arguments in its favour. Both the Playfair and Ridley Commissioners had argued strongly in favour of common scales, as a means of facilitating transfers of officers from one department to another. These transfers were important when it came to dealing with redundant staff. Furthermore, as the Ridley Commissioners had pointed out, experience of more than one department was of value both to the staff and to the departments. However, this proposal was not acted upon until 1919. "Prior to that date," said Sir Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, in his evidence before the Tomlin Commission, "people came in by Class I examination, and were then assigned to Departments, but there was no principle at all in regard to their initial rate of pay. In some Departments they would start at £150 a year, and in other Departments they would start at £200. It is manifest that a Class I man, wherever employed,

¹ Treasury Minute dated August 10, 1889, *P P*, 1889, lx, p. 409.

² Report, *op cit*, p. xxiv.

³ *Paper showing the Manner in which the Recommendations of the Royal Commission with Respect to the Civil Service have been dealt with*, *P P*, 1893-94, lxxi, p. 476.

⁴ *Evidence of Sir Stanley Leathes before the Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service*, *P P*, 1912-13, xv, p. 36.

⁵ *Papers showing the Manner in which the Recommendations of the Royal Commission with Respect to the Civil Service have been dealt with*, *P P*, 1893-94, lxxi, p. 476. Treasury Minute of August 10, 1889, *P P*, 1889, lx, p. 409.

is a similar article doing similar functions and entitled to similar pay. If you do not want him, do not have him. The position which existed in those days (I am talking of many years ago), had no sense or reason in it."¹ It had taken decades for this wisdom to be appreciated.

The hours of labour of the First Division (as it was called after 1890) were not regulated until 1910, when a seven-hour day was imposed.²

Thus, although rigid departmentalism was broken down as far as the Second Division was concerned by the end of the nineteenth century, it remained a distinctive feature of the higher grades of the Service until well into the twentieth century. As far as this section of the Service was concerned, the most important reforms effected concerned the methods of recruitment. It remained for the succeeding century to deal with the problems of organization.

The Problems of Mechanical Work Solved

The end of the troublesome question of what to do with the copyists was within sight. Their register was closed and was kept closed. The Ridley Commissioners favoured the abolition of the class. They recommended that as much of their work as possible should be done by machine, and the rest by boys between the ages of 15 and 19, and by junior clerks in the first years of their service. They considered that any press of work should be executed at piece rates or by contract on the open market.³

It was not, however, the adoption of these proposals which ultimately resolved the difficulties which had baffled administrators since 1855. The solution was brought about by a technical development—the evolution of the typewriter. Already these machines were manufactured on a commercial scale. A model with capital letters had been brought out in 1878. This improved design rapidly gained popularity.

Sir Algernon West, the enlightened Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, had introduced typewriters into his department, after what he described as "a battle royal with the Treasury."⁴ By 1888 he had all important letters copied in this way, and he looked forward to the complete elimination of copyists.⁵

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, P P, 1931, x, p. 1275.

² *London Gazette*, January 10, 1910. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 32.

³ *Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, xxvii, p. xviii. ⁴ WEST, SIR ALGERNON *Private Diaries* (1922), pp. 39-40.

⁵ *Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, xxvii, pp. 250-251.

The great obstacle to the use of typewriters in Government offices was the peculiar attitude of the official mind towards women. For the machines were operated by women—highly efficient women, whose virtues Sir Algernon West succinctly summarized: “They are accurate, they are quick, they are cheap, and there is no superannuation, . . . Then they must come to us qualified. That is skilled labour.”¹ Wages were from 17s to 23s a week, and for the supervisors from 25s to 30s a week. At these wages women not only typed, but also turned memoranda written in the third person into letters written in the first person. It was the sort of work which male writers would have considered so difficult as to justify their claim to promotion to an established grade in the Service! The women were indeed cheap, and cheapness was the one quality always certain to appeal to the Treasury.

In 1888 there was one “female typewriter” at the Foreign Office. The Admiralty had a machine but no woman to operate it, it seems to have been regarded somewhat as a plaything. There was one Lower Division clerk who used it occasionally.² The Permanent Under-Secretary to the War Office was “going into the question of type-writers to see whether we could arrange to have letters written by type writing, but this would involve a good deal of rearrangement of the office, because they are generally young women, I think, who work these type-writers, and one would have to organize a separate establishment for them . . .”³ Needless to say, there was no typewriter at the Treasury, although a copying machine had been introduced. Apparently the major difficulty had been overcome of using a shape and size of paper different from those dictated by the tradition of the department.⁴

Shorthand was not yet looked upon as the partner to typewriting. Most witnesses before the Ridley Commission recognized its usefulness. It was considered a suitable accomplishment for Lower Division clerks. Eventually shorthand and typing went hand in hand, and both became important fields of activity for women.⁵ It was thus finally that the questions of copyists and copying was closed.

¹ *Report from the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, xxvii, p 257. ² *Ibid*, 1st Report, P P, 1887, xix, p 384. ³ *Ibid*, p 12.

⁴ This was the reason given for the absence of the machine in the Department in 1873. *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure, Minutes of Evidence*, P P, 1873, vii, p 589.

⁵ For further details of the women shorthand-typists, and of the difficulties which beset their introduction into the Civil Service, see MARTINDALE, HILDA *Women Servants of the State* (1938), pp 65-69 (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

Co-ordination and Control

Little had been done to bring about that "efficient and intelligent" control of other departments by the Treasury which the Playfair Commissioners had advocated. The Permanent Secretary to the Treasury appears from his evidence before the Ridley Commission to have considered that the duties of his department in this sphere were limited to considerations of expenditure and economy.¹ Over such questions as hours of labour, leave of absence, etc., he said he had no direct control.² However, the Commissioners considered that some machinery for co-ordination was needed. They recommended the creation of a Permanent Consultative Committee, which should have the power to "entertain all questions affecting establishments, including pensions, all proposals for increased expenditure, and that it should also be required to review periodically all offices, with the object of ascertaining whether any reduction can be made in the number of the staff, or other economies effected, its recommendations and proceedings being officially recorded."³ This was a re-suscitation of the proposal made years before by Sir Charles Trevelyan and rejected by the authorities.

The Committee was not set up. It was left to the twentieth century to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of co-ordination.

Survey

By the end of the nineteenth century the British Civil Service had passed through the essential stages of its slow evolution. The servants of departmental or office heads had become the servants of the State. They held their posts during good behaviour, received salaries, and were pensioned at the end of their working life. They had been a small body, sometimes perhaps efficient, often grossly inefficient, frequently given—like their political chiefs—to speculation. But as time passed speculation had been discountenanced and put down. There followed a difficult period immediately after the passing of the Reform Bill. Members of Parliament could no longer buy either seats or support from their constituents. Patronage, or the right to give away jobs in the Civil Service, became an important factor in the game of party politics. Yet the existing traditions of the Service which recognized the right⁴ of officers to keep their

¹ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, 2nd Report, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1888, xxvii, pp. 2-4.

² *Ibid*, 1st Report, *Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1887, xix, p. 4.

³ *Ibid*, 2nd Report, p. xii.

⁴ This was not a legal right. It was merely a right by custom.

places during good behaviour survived. The activities of Government increased, and with them the importance of the Civil Service. Evidence leads one to conclude that either the inefficiency of Civil Servants increased, or else that it became more manifest. There followed the struggle for reform, for the introduction of an efficient technique of organization based upon the division of labour, for a method of recruitment which would secure efficient, upright and intelligent officers. Recruitment by open competitive examination, already adopted for the Indian Civil Service, was introduced for certain sections of the British Civil Service by the Order in Council of 1870. By the end of the century the value of the method was generally recognized. Political patronage as a method of appointment had become obsolete. In 1848 Sir Charles Trevelyan suggested that a proper division of labour was essential to the efficient running of the Service. The principle had been accepted in business activities, yet there was violent controversy over its application to the administrative departments. Then trouble arose owing to the difficulty of securing efficient division without getting rid of existing officers. Both the Playfair and Ridley Commissions had to consider this question. From 1875 onwards Commissions recognized the advantages which would accrue from co-ordinating the Service, from paying officers in all departments executing similar duties on the same salary scale, from attaching officers to the Service rather than to particular departments. This conception of a unified Service was but partially grasped by successive Governments. The creation of the Second Division was the first step toward this objective. Until the end of the century and after the upper grades of the Service remained organized on a departmental basis. No machinery for co-ordination had been set up. Much had been done, and more had been envisaged. The Service had acquired most of its characteristic features.

CHAPTER XII

SUPERANNUATION, 1834-1900

The Superannuation Act of 1834 legalized Treasury practice with regard to pensions, whereby deductions were made from the salaries of all Civil Servants appointed after the year 1829 to pay for the superannuation allowances. It will be remembered that, although no pensions could be granted to those who retired for other than health reasons before the age of 65, there was no age limit in the Service.

In the middle of the century, when all the conditions of the Civil Service were carefully scrutinized, superannuation came up for reconsideration. This reconsideration was necessary because of anomalies which had grown up in the interval, because of discontent within the Service with the existing arrangement, and because a significant number of Members of Parliament continued to complain about the cost of superannuation.

Many of the anomalies had arisen as a result of the rapid expansion of the Service during the intervening years. Thus the Poor Law Board had been established after the passing of the Superannuation Act, and consequently its officers were not covered by the pensions provisions. The State, Sir Charles Trevelyan pointed out, had the alternatives of extending the pension benefits to new departments, or of consigning "good and faithful servants to disgraceful poverty," or of allowing officers to go on receiving full salaries and doing their work inefficiently.¹ An even more difficult situation occurred in the Education Office, where part of the staff was pensionable and part was not. This state of affairs had arisen because, until the office was reorganized in 1853, the staff had not been recruited directly, but drawn from the Privy Council Office. Officers recruited to the Privy Council Office came within the provisions of the Act of 1834, those recruited directly to the Education Office did not.² There were also anomalies in the Post Office. In

¹ *Select Committee on Superannuation Allowances, Minutes of Evidence*, P P, 1856, ix, p. 45. The same situation arose with regard to the Board of Health, which was formed in 1848. None of its staff was pensionable. See *Royal Commission on the Superannuation Act*, P P, 1857 (session 2), xxiv, Appendix II, p. 224.

² *Report from the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Superannuation Act*, P P, 1857 (session 2), xxiv, p. 249.

certain large offices, for instance, London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, officers were charged with deductions, in similar offices in Liverpool, Manchester, and Glasgow they were not ¹

The discontent within the Service over the "deductions" was due in part to misconceptions which had arisen because the abatements were commonly referred to as "deductions for the Superannuation Fund." From this Civil Servants inferred that the money was paid into a separate account, forming a distinct fund. The Treasury received a constant stream of letters from widows and orphans of men who had died in the Service, asking for a return of the deductions, stating that their husbands or fathers had paid for so many years into the "fund," and that they had received no benefit from these abatements from their authorized salaries ²

In 1846 Civil Servants formed an Association designed to get the problem straightened out. This Association sent a deputation to Lord John Russell, and thereafter kept succeeding Chancellors of the Exchequer informed of their proceedings ³ The basis of their case was simple. They maintained that the purpose of the deductions was to pay for the cost of the pensions, that, in fact, the contributions far exceeded the disbursements, so that the State was making a profit out of the transaction ⁴

The Treasury figures showed that in 1856 the annual amount of the deductions was upwards of £60,000, and that the annual amount of the pensions paid to all who had contributed to the deductions was about £12,000 ⁵ Recently it has been denied that the contributions levied exceeded the benefits paid out. ⁶ At the time, however, no satisfactory evidence was produced to invalidate the Civil Servants' contention. Since the deductions were felt to be inequitable, they created a bad spirit in the Service, which, according to Sir Charles Trevelyan, obstructed the efforts to reform the administrative machine

Hostility to the deductions was aggravated by contingent dis-

¹ *Report from the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of the Superannuation Act*, P P, 1857 (session 2), xxiv, p 222

² *Select Committee on Superannuation Allowances, Evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan*, P P, 1856, lx, p 30

³ *Ibid*, p 124. The Association was dissolved when the Select Committee was appointed to go into the question of Superannuation. See *ibid*, p 74

⁴ *Report of the Commission on the Superannuation Act*, op cit, pp 222-223

⁵ *Select Committee on Superannuation Allowances, Evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan*, P P, 1856, lx, p 33

⁶ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, P P, 1930-31, x, p 730. It there asserts that the belief was subsequently found to be without foundation.

contents Since 1834 a large number of Civil Servants had had their salaries reduced Moreover, income tax affected a large number of the smaller incomes¹ These circumstances fostered antagonism to the abatements

The hostility to the pension charges expressed in the House of Commons was probably in part the usual expression of dislike of public expenditure, always to be met in certain quarters of the House In part, however, it was fostered by a change in the methods of presenting estimates which took place in 1832 Before that date the Superannuation Estimates had been limited to the pensions of officers in departments which possessed no Fee Funds The pensions estimates for departments such as the Treasury, the offices of the Secretaries of State, the Privy Council Office, and the Board of Trade were not submitted to Parliament, although they contributed to the deficiencies in the Fee Funds which Parliament was asked to vote From 1832 onwards Fee Fund pensions, and most of the other pensions hitherto included in the votes for salaries, were brought together in the Superannuation Estimates² Consequently Members of Parliament became aware of the volume of the total cost The introduction of the "deductions" only partially appeased the economisers Few people seemed aware of the degree to which a majority of Civil Servants paid the cost of their own pensions.

The bodies appointed to consider superannuation had to decide whether pension schemes should be retained, if they were retained, on what basis payments should be made, and how best to meet the discontent over existing arrangements

The Commissioners re-stated the grounds which made the payment of superannuation allowances advisable. There were no adequate means by which a Civil Servant could provide against incapacity by insurance It was important that he "should feel himself in a safe and independent position, and that his mind should not be harassed or distressed by anxiety respecting his future condition" If no regular provision were made, it was likely that the practice of making irregular provision would grow up Lastly, if no pension provision existed, "the hardship of removing an estimable public servant without provision would be avoided by retaining him

¹ *Report from the Commission on the Superannuation Act, P P*, 1857 (session 2), xxiv, p 222

² *Memorandum on the Origin and Development of Superannuation and Retired Allowances in the Civil Service, prepared by Sir H Maxwell Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence of the 2nd Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments, P P*, 1888, xxvii, p 421

in the Service after he had become incompetent to perform his duties. This is perhaps the strongest argument in favour of a system of superannuations"¹

The Commissioners looked upon superannuation as a payment which was both just and necessary, and as a way of safeguarding the financial integrity of Civil Servants. In these respects their findings corroborated the views of those who had recommended the provision of pensions for Civil Servants in the later years of the eighteenth century. That the right to superannuation benefits should be extended to those serving in recently created departments was the logical corollary of these findings.

When the Commissioners came to discuss the question of the "deductions," they did not hesitate to condemn the confusions of the past years. Salaries, they affirmed, should be paid net. "It appears to us," they went on, "that unless some good reason can be shown to the contrary, the most natural and proper course in all such transactions is to call things by their right names, so as to prevent, as far as possible, any mistake as to the nature of the arrangement. If it is intended that the salary actually paid to a Civil Servant shall be of a certain amount, and that in addition to this salary he shall, under certain circumstances, be entitled to a retired allowance according to a prescribed scale, it seems *prima facie* to be the most correct course to describe the remuneration of the Civil Service as consisting of a certain salary, with a prospect, under certain circumstances, of a retired allowance, rather than to add to the salary a certain nominal amount which is supposed to be equivalent for the chance of a superannuation allowance, and thus to describe the salary as being of a larger amount than it really is, without mentioning the superannuation"² The light of clear thinking was thus brought to illuminate previous muddles.

Once the basic principles at issue were clearly defined, the Commissioners proceeded to make their recommendations. They advised the abolition of existing "deductions" without a corresponding reduction in the salaries upon which they had been charged. They pointed out that where particular salaries were too high it was open to the authorities to reduce the scale when new appointments were made. They advocated compulsory retirement for all at the age of 60, with the possibility of extension up to the age of 65 in exceptional circumstances. A group of Civil Servants had put forward a proposal

¹ *Report of the Commission on the Superannuation Act*, op. cit., p. 225

² *Ibid.*, p. 226

for the provision of pensions for the widows of those who had died in the Service. This the Commissioners turned down. It was possible to provide by insurance against premature death. Moreover, the sympathy for widows of deceased Civil Servants was less on the grounds of their widowhood than for the fact that their husbands had made large contributions (described as "deductions") to a supposed fund from which they had themselves received no benefit.¹

The recommendations amounted to a full justification of two of the Service's contentions: that deductions were unjustifiable, and that the Service was not overpaid. The outcome of the Commissioners' report was the Superannuation Act of 1859.² Those entitled to Civil Service superannuation were clearly defined: "For the Purpose of this Act, no Person hereafter to be appointed shall be deemed to have served in the permanent Civil Service unless such Person hold his Appointment directly from the Crown, or has been admitted into the Civil Service with a Certificate from the Civil Service Commissioners." Deductions were restored. The original Bill included a clause making retirement compulsory at the age of 65, however, there was sufficient influence exerted to get it deleted.³ No pension was payable to those who retired before the age of 60 for other reasons than those of ill-health.⁴

The Act of 1859 remained the basis of superannuation arrangements throughout the remainder of the century. Other Acts passed in the period in no way modified the principles which had been laid down.

The abolition of deductions dissatisfied those who considered the cost of superannuation too high. Indeed, the Ridley Commissioners recommended reintroduction on a somewhat modified scale.⁵ Their suggestion was not adopted.

The introduction of a compulsory age limit was recommended by a Select Committee in 1873,⁶ by the Ridley Commission in 1883,⁷ and in a memorandum from a representative body of Civil

¹ *Report of the Commission on the Superannuation Act*, P P (session 2), xxiv, p. 226.

² 22 Vic., c. 26.

³ *Civil Service (Playfair) Inquiry Commission*, P.P., 1875, xxiii, p. 173.

⁴ The basis of the calculation of the pension was one-sixtieth of the retiring salary (or in certain cases of the average salary over the past three years) for each full year's service, with a maximum of 40-60.

⁵ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, xxvii, p. xxi.

⁶ *Select Committee on Civil Services Expenditure*, 3rd Report, P P, 1873, vii, p. 415.

⁷ *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, 2nd Report, P.P., 1888, xxvii, p. 23.

Servants in 1875¹ Although the Superannuation Act was amended in 1887, no retirement clause was introduced. However, in an Order in Council of 1890 it was laid down that the Head of a Department might call upon any Civil Servant to retire when he had reached the age of 60, and that at the age of 65 retirement should be compulsory for all. In exceptional cases an extension not exceeding five years might be allowed.²

The Civil Service had been in advance of other institutions in its pensions provisions. As time went by, superannuation schemes were introduced in other spheres. Hostility to this kind of expenditure grew less. The foresight of the State was justified, and its practice emulated.

¹ *Memorandum of the Civil Service Consulting Committee on the First Report of the Civil Service Inquiry Commission* (1875), p. 34.

² Order in Council of 1890, *P P*, 1890, lviii, p. 167.

PART III

CHAPTER XIII

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By the beginning of the twentieth century the pattern of the development of the Civil Service was set. Achievement lagged somewhat behind theory. Political considerations had prevented the application of common grading to officers above the Second Division. No administrator had devised an acceptable method of co-ordination. Until these deficiencies were made good it could not be claimed that the departments had been moulded into a single unified Service,¹ nor that the conditions which competent investigators considered essential for efficient working had been secured. The unfinished work of the nineteenth century had to be completed. There were also fresh problems to be met.

Government activity expanded rapidly, increasing the work of existing administrative departments, and, from time to time, necessitating the creation of new ones. The Board of Education was established by an Act of 1899. To it were assigned the functions of the Education Department of the Privy Council, of the Science and Art Department, and some of those of the Charity Commissioners which related to educational foundations. The Board's work grew with the expansion of education and the development of the school medical services. New social services came into existence. Old age was found to be one of the principal causes of pauperism,² and the desire to secure for the aged other relief than that afforded by the Poor Law resulted in the Old Age Pensions scheme of 1908. The Labour Exchange Act of 1909 and the National Insurance Act of 1911 embodied attempts to deal with employment and unemployment which entailed a vast amount of work in a new field and the employment of large staffs. The administration was under the supervision of the Board of Trade until in 1917 it passed to the Ministry of Labour. The first National Health Insurance Act was passed in 1911. In the early days the administration of the Act was

¹ "Until relatively recent years the expression 'Civil Service' did not correspond either to the spirit or the facts of the organization so described," said Sir Warren Fisher. *Minutes of Evidence, Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, p. 1267.

² WILLIAMS, G. *The State and the Standard of Living* (1936), p. 53.

in the hands of three Commissions one for England, one for Scotland, one for Wales. These Commissions were not departments of the Civil Service, and were staffed partly from outside the Service. Their duties were taken over by the Ministry of Health on its creation in 1919.

It was not only the social services which expanded. The Public Trustee's Office opened on January 1, 1908.¹ The Board of Agriculture, which had been created by an Act of 1889 to administer the work arising under various statutes relating to agricultural statistics and the diseases of animals, took over in 1903 those duties of the Board of Trade which related to fisheries. The Board was constituted a Ministry in 1919, and its first Minister was appointed in 1920. This change indicates the increased importance of the department.

The expansion of the activities of Government entailed an increase in the number of Civil Servants employed. Excluding industrial staffs, such as those employed at Woolwich and in the dockyards, established Civil Servants numbered 107,782 in March 1902,² 135,721 in March 1911,³ 368,910 in 1920,⁴ 306,154 in 1929,⁵ 376,491 in 1938.⁶ These figures include those employed in the revenue departments.

During this period the State had to face certain of the problems which confronted other employers of labour. There was, for instance, the question of juvenile labour, represented in the Service by the boy clerks, for a majority of whom the occupation was a blind alley. The question was raised as to whether the State was justified in encouraging boys to take up this kind of work.

In the course of the century women secured a considerable degree of emancipation. During and after the Great War it was no longer possible to confine them to the typing grades of the Service, or to posts dealing exclusively with their own sex, on the grounds that they were incapable of responsible work. On the other hand, in the Service no less than in other spheres, there was violent male prejudice against their employment, against granting them equal pay for equal

¹ *Minutes of Evidence of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, p. 1223.

² *Return Showing the Total Number of Persons in the Established Civil Service*, March 31, 1902, P.P., 1902, lxxxiii.

³ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1911, P.P., 1911, 1.

⁴ *Memorandum on Present and Pre-War Expenditure with Particulars of Government Staffs at Certain Dates*, P.P., 1920, xxvii, p. 618.

⁵ *Staffs Employed in Government Departments*, P.P., 1929-30, xxii.

⁶ *Staffs Employed in Government Departments on April 1, 1938*, P.P., 1937-38, xx.

work, and in favour of making celibacy an essential qualification for their employment in any grade

The Great War gave rise to many difficulties which demanded adjustment and solution when it was over. New departments had been created. Temporary staffs had been employed on a large scale. Treasury control had been relaxed. The customary methods of recruitment had been suspended. After the war, departments had to be reorganized and Treasury control restored. There were also exceptional claims to be dealt with, such as those of various classes of ex-service men who had been or wished to be appointed to the permanent Civil Service without undergoing the customary educational and physical tests.

The problem of co-ordination remained to be solved. A technique had still to be found for dealing with questions in dispute between the various grades of Civil Servants and their employer, the State. There were likewise questions of adaptation to be considered, such as how far existing ages for recruitment remained satisfactory, and how far the State was securing the services of those whose talents it most required.

There is no need to describe here details of the contemporary organization of the Civil Service. Excellent books exist which are devoted to this subject.¹ Our purpose is confined to showing how the developments which began in the nineteenth century were fulfilled, the modifications which were found necessary in the methods of organization, and the new considerations which attracted attention.

Methods of Recruitment ✓

Open competitive examinations had been established as the dominant method of recruiting Civil Servants. There continued other methods, and in 1912 the MacDonnell Commissioners enumerated seven methods of appointment to the Service.² Some twenty thousand clerical posts were filled by open competition. There were, however, a large body of posts, designated as "technical" under section IV of the Superannuation Act of 1859, which were filled without competition. Some twelve hundred officers were appointed in this way.³ They were pensionable, but their qualifications were

¹ ROBSON, W. A. (ed.) *The British Civil Servant* (1937), MUSTOE, N. E. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932)

² *1st Report of the Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence, P. P., 1912-13, xv, p. 176*

³ *Ibid., 4th Report, 1914, xvi, p. 32.*

not certified by the Civil Service Commissioners. A number of officers with special technical qualifications were appointed under Clause 7 of the Order in Council of 1910, which had consolidated preceding Orders without altering their underlying principles. Under this clause the Civil Service Commissioners were empowered to dispense in part or wholly with examination tests, as well as with age limits, in granting their certificate.

Whatever the nature of the Civil Service appointment, whether it was to a highly specialized post in the British Museum for which open competition was impractical, for an administrative post in one of the great departments of State, for a technical post such as veterinary inspector in the Ministry of Agriculture, certain basic principles in the methods of appointment had been agreed upon. It had been recognized that posts should be awarded on merit, and that merit should be objectively assessed, that the role of personal prejudice and political influence in recommending candidates for appointments should be eliminated as far as the Home Service was concerned. These principles, which had been established in the nineteenth century, were maintained and extended during the twentieth century. Lowe and Trevelyan had stressed the need for vigilance to exclude any form of jobbery, and their exhortations were acted upon.

The rapid expansion in Government activity which took place in the first quarter of the century led to an increase in the number of Civil Servants employed. The Board of Trade had to provide an adequate staff to administer the Labour Exchange and National Insurance Acts. The senior posts could not be filled by men who had just finished their education. To meet the situation, the Board dispensed with the usual methods of appointment. Seventeen administrative officers were appointed directly by the President of the Board,¹ that is to say, theoretically, by patronage. The procedure adopted was that the vacancies for managerial posts were advertised in the Press, and after the applications had been carefully sifted, a Selection Committee interviewed some two hundred applicants, from amongst whom the appointments were made.² Thus every effort was made to make an objective assessment of the candidates' qualifications, and the final selection was made by means of a competitive interview. The clerical staffs were selected and subjected to a quali-

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 3rd Report, P P, 1913 xviii, p. 315.*

² *Ibid, Minutes of Evidence of 1st Report, P P, 1912-13, p. 123.*

fyng examination The expansion of other departments was less sudden and called for less extraordinary methods

In addition to the increase in Civil Service appointments, there was an increase in the number of persons employed by bodies which, though not part of the Civil Service, received important Government grants. The Public Trustee's office had an annual salary bill of £26,000¹ The Road Board had been created in 1909 to promote road improvements. The three Health Commissions administered the National Health Insurance Acts These official bodies had been set up to meet particular necessities The way in which they were staffed varied, and conformed to no uniform pattern At the Public Trustee's Office and the Road Board appointments were in the hands of the Heads of Departments,² whereas the Health Commissions recruited their staffs both by direct appointment and by competitive examinations under the auspices of the Civil Service Commissioners.³

By 1912 it was felt that the time had come to examine once more questions related to the Civil Service, and in that year the MacDonnell Commission was appointed, and required to report on existing methods of making appointments to the Civil Service, on the working of the open competitive examination system, and to recommend alterations and improvements

Throughout the inquiry the Commissioners paid particular attention to the grounds on which certain posts had been excluded from competition and the reasons for which others were filled on the old patronage basis They emphasized the importance of maintaining and extending the open competitive principle

The system established in 1890 had, on the whole, worked well There were still a few survivals of the patronage system At the Board of Education none of the higher administrative officials, known in that department as "Examiners," were recruited through the Class I examinations These appointments were made directly

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xv, p 59*

² *Ibid*, pp 59 and 82.

³ The administrative staff of the English Commission comprised five Civil Servants who had entered by open competitive examination and one man appointed by Order in Council Clerks and typists were appointed by open competitive examination The bulk of the Scottish staff consisted of Civil Servants transferred from other departments The typists were appointed by nomination of the Head of the Department and passed a qualifying examination conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners The bulk of the Welsh Commission was not appointed by open competition, nor composed of persons with Civil Service experience *Ibid*, pp. 429, 451, and 453.

by the President of the Board, and there was no public notification of vacancies¹ Thus the open competitive principle was abrogated, and an avenue for patronage survived² The Commissioners condemned these conditions, and described the method of appointment as "one of the last survivals from the time when the principle of patronage had not yet given place to open competition"³ They advocated that the Board should in future recruit through the Class I examination, a recommendation which was followed on the resumption of competitive examinations after the Great War

At the Admiralty a custom had grown up of nominating "extra clerks" on a temporary basis, with a prospect of promotion on to the establishment, a departure from the open competitive principle which the Commissioners considered retrograde⁴

There were no other examples of deliberate evasion of competition The experience of the Board of Trade came in an entirely different category The department had had to expand in the course of a very few months to meet an extraordinary situation Both senior and junior officers had been required The contemporary absence of any machinery for co-ordination in the Service had, as the Commissioners pointed out, made it difficult to recruit suitable experienced Civil Servants from other departments to fill the more responsible posts in the new organization In view of these difficulties the Commissioners sanctioned the measures taken, commending to the notice of the Department their recommendations with regard to professional posts

In 1914 professional appointments in the Civil Service were still made under Section IV of the Superannuation Act of 1859 Appointments lay with the Heads of Departments—that is to say, they were still made by patronage These professional posts were those requiring specialized training and qualifications, such as veterinary surgeons to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, medical men at the

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 2nd Report*, Q 8700, P P, 1912-13, xv, p 500 The appointments were made under Section IV of the Superannuation Act of 1859 The Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, Mr Selby-Bigge, vigorously defended the position on the grounds of its success and of the opportunity it gave of enlisting the services of men of experience On the other hand, it was shown that between 1900 and 1912, of seventy-nine appointments, thirty-two had been of men who were within five years of the completion of their university careers Nor were the Examiners found to be drawn from men of higher academic qualification than the Class I men

² Only two examples of political favouritism were brought to light, however the appointment of a son of a Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, and that of the stepson of a Parliamentary Education Minister *Op cit*, p 162

³ *Ibid*, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xvi, p 74

⁴ *Ibid*, p 70

Ministry of Health or Board of Education, specialists at the British Museum, lawyers in various departments, etc. It was considered unsuitable to select those who had undergone a long technical or professional training, and who were beyond the usual examination ages, by open competitive examinations. Nevertheless the MacDonnell Commissioners held that the posts should be filled on a basis of merit, and that they should be open to all those who possessed the necessary qualifications. Under existing arrangements there was no public notification of vacancies, and consequently no means by which qualified persons could know when they occurred.¹

The Commissioners proposed that for the future all professional posts should be advertised in the *London Gazette* and in the Press, and that the preliminary selection of qualified candidates to be submitted to the responsible Minister should be made not by an individual but by a Committee, upon which the Civil Service Commission should be represented.² They favoured the repeal of Section IV of the Superannuation Act of 1859, the object of which was to regularize the payment of salary and pension without a Civil Service certificate, and to allow the grant of a pension based on a period exceeding the actual period of service. They considered that a high initial salary met the financial difficulty, and the provisions of Clause 7 of the Order in Council of 1910,³ which allowed the Commissioners to dispense with the competitive examination tests, met the other requirements.

After the Great War the MacDonnell Commissioners' recommendations formed the basis of the methods employed for recruiting professional officers. There is public notification of vacancies, and from those who send in written applications a number are chosen to appear before a Selection Board. The Board is usually presided over by a member of the Civil Service Commission.⁴ The method is that of competitive interview.

There can be no doubt that these reforms filled a gap which had been left by earlier regulations, and which had left a small but important field in which considerations of favouritism could dominate considerations of merit.

Many of the small bodies which had come into being, such as

¹ Cf. the methods of appointing factory inspectors. The Home Office did not advertise vacancies. There was limited competition amongst applicants, but examinations did not take place at regular intervals. *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 2nd Report, P P*, 1912-13, xv, p. 373.

² *Ibid.*, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xvi, p. 53.

³ See *ante*, p. 166.

⁴ MUSTOE, N. E. *Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), p. 10.

the Road Board and the Development Commission, employed staffs on a temporary basis. Where the work to be done was likely to come to an end within a specific period this arrangement was satisfactory. But experience had shown that where work of a permanent kind was done by temporary staffs grave difficulties arose. These difficulties had been recognized by Sir Charles Trevelyan in the middle of the last century. The MacDonnell Commissioners were anxious to see the position of those employed by the various miscellaneous bodies regularized. They advocated that the professional officers, such as the lawyers employed by the Charity Commissioners, should be engaged in the manner already outlined, and that the clerical workers in all departments should be recruited by the normal competitive methods. They deprecated the manner in which patronage had been exercised at the Road Board,¹ and even where, as in the Office of the Public Trustee, care and precaution had been taken, in the exercise of this dangerous privilege, they recommended resort to other methods as a safeguard for the future.

Thus the MacDonnell Commissioners censured the remaining avenues of patronage, and by their recommendations sought to provide safeguards. The explanations given by a Treasury witness for the survivals which had been found are not without significance. He attributed them less to the old motives of patronage than to the fact that everybody was "of opinion that he personally has got the gift which enables him to select in just this particular instance the men who would not be found by ordinary methods."² Whatever the rationalization of the motive, the facts illustrated Lowe's dictum that "all persons in authority are the natural enemies of competition."

It is significant that when the Civil Service again came under inquiry in 1929-31 patronage did not figure in the discussions, a fact which may perhaps be interpreted as evidence of the efficacy of the vigilance which had been exercised and of the adequacy of the safeguards which had been provided.

The prevention of corrupt appointments was but a small part of the task of Civil Service inquiry and supervision. It was equally important to ensure that the country was securing the services of the kind of servants it required.

Increased experience of different kinds of written examinations

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xiv, p. 82.*

² *1st Report of the Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, P P, 1912-13, xv p. 162.*

led to modification in the claims that were made for them. In early days it had been thought that the order of merit arrived at by numerical marking of candidates' papers accurately assessed their comparative abilities. This opinion weakened. Cambridge abandoned the custom of placing wranglers and classicists in order of merit. It was pointed out by a Committee which was appointed to consider the Civil Service Class I examination that, great as was the difficulty in assigning an order of merit to candidates examined in a common subject, it was immeasurably greater where the examination was in the varied combination of subjects open to those competing for places in the Civil Service.¹ The ablest of the candidates who presented themselves did not necessarily gain the most marks. There was no question of abandoning the examination system, which was the only objective method of assessing merit so far devised. It was still looked upon as a good method of classifying intellectual abilities. It was certainly impartial. This modification of opinion was well expressed by Sir Warren Fisher, who maintained that, however desirable it might be to rely on other tests than written examinations, the risk of nepotism and influence in relation to first appointments made it "quite out of the question even to contemplate any essential departure from the existing principle of examinations held by the Civil Service Commissioners."²

The changed attitude led to the use of certain modifications in the examination system. After the Great War the oral examination, or *viva voce*, was used to supplement the written examination. It was used first for the Class I examination, and later for other classes.³

The question was raised of what the interview was designed to test, how far it was an accurate way of gauging ability, how far it was likely to allow the personal prejudices of the examiners to influence the objectivity of existing tests. There were some who held that the methods gave scope for the expression of class prejudices. The Tomlin Commission did not find that the facts substantiated this contention.⁴ They recommended the retention of the interview, but remarked that care should be exercised in the selec-

¹ *Report of the Committee appointed to Consider and Report upon the Scheme of Examination for Class I of the Civil Service*, P P, 1917-18, viii, p. 129.

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 1268.

³ For 3rd Class Officers in the Ministry of Labour, for Assistant Inspectors of Taxes, for Assistant Auditors under the Ministry of Health, and for certain Customs and Excise officers. *Ibid.*, p. 29, Q. 470.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Report*, P P, 1930-31, x, p. 593.

tion of the personnel of interviewing boards. They were satisfied that the maximum degree of impartiality was shown.

It is essential that recruitment of different grades of the Civil Service should be related to the educational system of the country, so that the ages of recruitment should correspond with the recognized stages in the educational course and with the termination of university training. This question received careful attention. It is desirable that the subjects of examination should correspond with those taught in the schools and universities, for otherwise there arises the necessity of special "cramming" for the Civil Service. The MacDonnell Commissioners pointed out that there were two objections to "cramming" the educational objection that the device is not a means of gaining knowledge, but rather a method of acquiring in a short time special information used in passing examinations and subsequently forgotten, and the democratic objection that since "cramming" is provided in private institutions run for profit, it makes "success dependent upon an expensive substitute for the ordinary school education" and "places the poorer candidates at a disadvantage"¹. The aim of the Civil Service examinations is to select the best produce of the educational system of the country, not the best products of cramming institutions. Investigation showed that "cramming" affected all grades of the Service. More than half the candidates for the Second Division examinations were found to have undergone some sort of special preparation².

The way to mitigate the evils of cramming was by introducing modifications in the examination syllabuses. Efforts were made in this direction in ensuing years. The degree of their success is not easy to assess, for the Tomlin Commissioners did not discuss the question thoroughly. No detailed evidence was given about the preparation of candidates for the Second Division examinations. With regard to the Administrative class, the evidence given was conflicting, the witnesses for Oxford University maintaining that the alteration in the syllabuses had led to fewer men using crammers, whilst the witnesses for London University maintained that men still spent a year at a crammers' preparing for the examinations after their university courses were completed³.

Witnesses before the MacDonnell Commission discussed in some

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xvi, p 41*

² *Ibid*

³ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence, pp 657 and 672*

detail the sources from which successful candidates for the Administrative class were drawn. At the time there were 450 officers in this class who formed part of the establishments in sixteen public departments.¹ They filled the more responsible and lucrative posts in the Service. Many were of opinion that the existing examination system gave undue preference to graduates of the older universities, and in particular those who had studied classical subjects. Evidence showed that of the first twenty successful candidates in 1910 fifteen had taken Greek and Latin and Greek and Roman history, in 1911 seventeen. The system not only favoured the older universities at the expense of the younger, but also those whose preliminary education had been carried on in the kind of schools which provided a good grounding in classical languages.²

These facts gave rise to discussions on how far the Service was drawing on the best talents of all sections of the nation. The Commissioners were anxious that this class of post should not be regarded as the prize of a particular social caste, but rather of those with a given educational background.³ They recognized, however, that existing arrangements were unsatisfactory. The hostility of certain witnesses to the Administrative class was shown in their suggestion that it was unnecessary, and that all posts could be satisfactorily filled by promotion from the inferior grades. The Commissioners dissented from this view, and drew attention to the experience of the Customs and Excise departments, which had tried for twelve years to fill all posts by promotion and had ceased to recruit through Class I examinations after 1898, but had been dissatisfied with the results.⁴ The solution lay in the co-ordination of the educational system. They quoted the speech made by Lord Haldane to the University of Bristol, in which he said: "The remedy for what is a real grievance appears to me to be that democracy should add a new plank to its platform, and insist upon equality of opportunity in education as something that should be within the reach of every boy and girl." The State would suffer if the intellectual level of its

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P.P., 1914, xvi, p. 44.*

² *Ibid., 1st Report, P.P., 1912-13, xv, p. 138.* Cf. pp. 129 and 130, evidence of Sir Stanley Leathes, which showed that from 1906 to 1910, of 473 successful candidates for Class I examination for the Home Civil Service, the Indian Civil Service, and Eastern Cadetship, 247 were from Oxford, 142 from Cambridge, 23 from Trinity College, Dublin, 17 from Edinburgh, 14 from the Royal University of Ireland, 7 from Glasgow, 6 from Aberdeen, 5 from London, 2 from Manchester, and 1 from Leeds.

³ *Ibid., 4th Report, P.P., 1914, xvi, p. 42.*

⁴ *Ibid., p. 48.*

Civil Servants were lowered. The remedy was to break down the class barrier by making it possible for any youth of 18 to go on to the university if he had sufficient ability. The Commissioners contrasted the deficiencies in the English educational ladder with the superior opportunities for scholarships and bursaries provided in Scotland.¹

After the Great War the examinations for the Administrative class were somewhat modified. There had been some improvement in the scholarship system. Evidence given before the Tomlin Commission showed that in the years 1925-29 there had been a decrease of 10 per cent, as compared with the years 1906-10,² in the number of successful candidates in the Administrative group competition who were drawn from the one hundred and fifty public schools represented at the Headmasters' Conference. Although a majority of the successful candidates were graduates of the older universities, there was a slight increase in the number of successful candidates who had been educated at the younger universities.³ There is no adequate analysis of the position in later years. Clearly the relation of Civil Service recruitment to the educational system is a question which needs constant adjustment.

✓ *Promotion*

From the early days of Civil Service inquiries investigators have given careful attention to the question of the principles which should govern promotion. Promotion refers to the movements from a lower to a higher grade in the Service, not to the receipt of annual increments where emoluments are paid on a graduated scale within a given grade. Although it was early recognized that the efficiency of the Service would be furthered if promotion were the reward for meritorious work, the application of this principle was impracticable whilst appointments were made by patronage. Commissions which sat after the Order in Council of 1870 had introduced recruitment

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P*, 1914, xvi, p. 36.

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 62, Q. 1049.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 115. For the years 1925-29 (inclusive), of 414 successful candidates for the Home Civil Service, the Indian Civil Service, and Eastern Cadetships, 145 were from Oxford, 135 from Cambridge, 57 from London, 21 from India and Ceylon, 19 from Dublin, 17 from Edinburgh, 4 each from Glasgow and Manchester respectively, 2 each from Aberdeen, St. Andrews, and Birmingham respectively, 1 each from Durham, Leicester, Nottingham, Wales, and South Africa.

by open competitive examinations stressed their view that the Service suffered from the prevalence of promotion by seniority, and that the application of the merit principle would stimulate the efficiency of the Service.

Civil Servants have taken up two distinct attitudes towards the promotion question. They have claimed a right to promotion from grade to grade. The view that the higher posts in the Service could be adequately filled by promotion survived into the twentieth century. It was necessary for the MacDonnell Commissioners to defend in some detail the maintenance of recruitment of graduates, whose initial salaries were at a higher rate than their pay would have been had they entered the Civil Service without undergoing university training.¹ On the other hand, some sections of the Service retained a preference for paying due respect to seniority and length of service. Thus the representative of the Association of Officers of Taxes, in his evidence before the Tomlin Commission, said that those he represented favoured promotion of senior men who were not definitely unfitted rather than selection on merit alone.²

For both these attitudes there are, as we have seen, ample historical reasons. Moreover, before the Great War there existed no machinery through which the Service could express its views and influence policy with regard to matters which touched it vitally. This situation was altered by the development of Whitley Councils.³ In 1921 a Promotions Committee of the National Council agreed upon a scheme for normal departmental promotions. Annual reports on the work of all officers receiving a salary of £700 and under were instituted. These reports were designed to record an officer's suitability for promotion. The scheme was approved by the Tomlin Commissioners,⁴ who suggested only certain minor alterations with regard to the machinery for interdepartmental promotion. The deliberations of the Promotions Committee led in some departments to the creation of Promotion Boards, at which representatives of the staff might be present.⁵

Despite the modifications in procedure which had taken place, the Tomlin Commissioners found it necessary to discuss at some length the principles on which promotion was granted. They noted

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P*, 1914, xvi, p. 46.

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 626, Q. 10712. ³ See post.

⁴ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, P P*, 1930-31, x, p. 599.

⁵ *Ibid*, *Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 133-134.

that Treasury sanction was required for promotion from one main class to another, and this they approved. But they emphasized once more the importance of the merit system. "We are agreed," they said, "that the consideration ruling all promotions should be the advancement of the efficiency of the public Service, and that this can only be secured by determining promotions on the ground of fitness. In regard to the Service generally, the factor of seniority is unlikely to be undervalued, and we deprecate the exercise of any pressure designed to stress the claims of seniority as against exceptional merit."¹

An important aspect of the promotion question relates to the way in which the highest places in the Service are filled. Here the danger which various Commissions considered was not the operation of seniority, but the effects of unjustifiable political influence, and they set themselves to devise safeguards.

The MacDonnell Commissioners found that whilst most of those in high offices had entered the Service by the normal channels, in a minority of cases gentlemen had been appointed from outside the Service, and there were amongst them some whose previous careers suggested no obvious qualifications for the duties of the official positions concerned. The Majority Report strongly criticized the situation, saying that they regarded "appointments of this kind anachronisms" at a time when patronage as a normal system of recruiting had been abandoned for more than a generation in favour of a system which purported to open a career to talent.² They recognized that cases might arise where it was legitimate to go outside the established Service. But in order to safeguard the abuse of this power, they proposed that when any appointment was made to a high administrative position in the Civil Service of a person who had not served for a prescribed number of years in the Service, the Minister appointing should be required to lay before Parliament a Minute stating the name, qualifications and previous career of the person whom he had appointed or proposed to appoint. This recommendation was never been implemented. An Order in Council of July 1920 stipulated that no person should be appointed either temporarily or permanently to any Civil Service post without the Civil Service Commissioners first issuing a certificate of his qualifications. The Commissioners must publish notices of all

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, P P*, 1930-31, pp. 603-604, paras. 294 and 296.

² *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P*, 1914, xvi, p. 50.

appointments and promotions with respect to which they have issued certificates of qualification in the *London Gazette* ¹

There are insufficient data to judge how far the position censured by the MacDonnell Commissioners has improved. The Tomlin Commissioners did not discuss the issues involved.

Another aspect of political influence discussed by the MacDonnell Commissioners was the danger that the few officers who were brought into direct contact with the political chiefs for the time being might gain an unfair advantage over those of their colleagues whose work, though of equal importance, was less conspicuous, with the result that a short period of service as Private Secretary to a Minister might carry disproportional weight ². They therefore suggested that whilst supreme power must necessarily lie with the Ministers, decisions upon questions of promotion should rest mainly with the Permanent Heads of Departments.

After 1920 there was an alteration in the procedure with regard to appointments to the highest posts in the Service. It was affirmed that the consent of the Prime Minister is required to the appointment of Permanent Heads of Departments, their Deputies, Principal Financial Officers and Principal Establishment Officers. When a vacancy of this kind occurs, it is the duty of the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, who is the head of the Civil Service, to submit advice for the consideration of the Minister of the Department concerned and for the consideration of the Prime Minister ³. The advice is tendered after consultation with his senior Service colleagues. Official witnesses expressed satisfaction with this machinery before the Tomlin Commission. No one raised the question of the after careers of Private Secretaries to Ministers. No return has been made comparable to that of 1890 ⁴. Perhaps it is not over-optimistic to assume that, had the situation been unsatisfactory, the matter would have been raised before the Tomlin Commission. This aspect of the promotion question was not discussed either in the report or in the evidence.

✓ Co-ordination and Control

During the twentieth century Governments turned their attention to that co-ordination of the Civil Service which had been so signally

¹ MUSTOE, N. E. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), p. 38.

² *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P.P., 1914, xvi, p. 64.*

³ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence, p. 1269.*

⁴ See *ante*, p. 137, footnote.

neglected in the nineteenth century Departments were fused into a unified Service by the introduction of common grading and salary scales into the ranks above the Second Division. A special personnel was created for dealing with establishment questions. The Whitley system was introduced into the Civil Service, thereby providing a machinery of negotiation and consultation between the various grades of Civil Servants and the State as represented by the higher officials of the Service. These important developments are highly significant and deserve detailed description.

When the MacDonnell Commissioners examined the Civil Service they found that co-ordination was as inadequate as it had been twenty-two years before, when the Ridley Commissioners advocated the creation of an integrated First Division. They stressed the necessity of unifying the Civil Service, and were of opinion that "every officer of the administrative and clerical classes should be regarded as liable for service at any time in any department to which the Government may desire to transfer him in the public interest, provided such a transfer shall cause him no loss of salary, present or prospective."¹ They proposed that this unification should be effected by the creation of three grades of officers, common to the entire Service.² They gave details of what they considered were appropriate salary scales and ages of recruitment for the different grades. War hindered action upon these recommendations. However, in 1919 a first step was taken towards co-ordination when, on the instructions of the Treasury, the Administrative staff throughout the Service below the rank of Permanent Heads of Departments and their Deputies were reorganized on common salary scales.³

These Treasury instructions did not implement the entire MacDonnell recommendations, nor was it appropriate that they should do so. War had led to considerable dislocation throughout the Service. Recruitment by competitive examinations had been suspended. Existing departments had been adapted to war exigencies. New departments had been created. Treasury control over the expenditure of other departments had somewhat relaxed. Various Committees were appointed to consider the readjustment of the

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xvi, p. 67*

² They proposed a Junior Clerical Class, recruited from boys of 16, a Senior Clerical Class, recruited from boys of 18, an Administrative Class, recruited from graduates.

³ *Report of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, P P, 1930-31, x, p. 534*

Service to peace conditions. The question of integrating the Service was further considered, and the MacDonnell recommendations scrutinized. The Committee to which the consideration of these questions was entrusted was the Reorganization Committee of the National Whitley Council. This Committee was composed exclusively of past and present Civil Servants, representing all grades of the Service, and with high officials representing State interests.¹

The appointment of this Committee was of considerable significance. For the first time in its history the Service, through representatives of all grades of its officers, was given an opportunity of drawing up a scheme for its reorganization. The brief report which was the outcome of these deliberations takes an honourable place amongst the many reports on Civil Service organization.

The Committee re-stated the nature of Civil Service work. They divided it into two categories: the first consisting of simple mechanical work, and the application of well-defined regulations, decisions and practice to particular cases, the second concerned with the formation of policy, the revision of existing practice, and with the organization and direction of the business of government.² They recognized the necessity for an effective division of labour to carry out this work efficiently, and proposed that there should be four grades of Civil Servants,³ directly recruited at varying ages and promoted from inferior grades where merit and talent existed. The principles were the same as those advocated by the MacDonnell Commissioners, the details varied slightly.

The Government accepted the Reorganization Committee's proposals, and embodied them in an Order in Council of 1920. Thenceforward common grades have been a characteristic feature of the Service. Whilst the Government was prepared to introduce the Reorganization Classes, as they are commonly called, they did not accept the principle that there should be no other grades in the Service. Many departments retained the so-called departmental classes, that is, classes of officers who do not belong to one of the

¹ The Committee was appointed "to consider the scope of the duties at present allotted to the Clerical Classes in the Civil Service, to report on the organization most appropriate to the effective performance of these duties, and to make recommendations as to scales of salary and method of recruitment." *Report of the National Whitley Council Reorganization Committee* (1920), p. 3.

² Cf. Trevelyan's description before the Committee on Miscellaneous Expenditure. See *ante*, p. 88.

³ The four classes are (i) The Writing Assistant Class, (ii) the Clerical Class, (iii) the Executive Class, (iv) the Administrative Class. There were to be in addition the Shorthand-typist and Typist classes.

great common Service grades but are peculiar to a particular department¹ It was necessary to arrive at a mean between the tendency to maintain departmental classes and the desire for a completely integrated Service The attainment of this mean must be a matter for constant adjustment. Sir Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, affirmed in 1930, in his evidence before the Tomlin Commission, that the development of a "Service" was by no means completed, and that the inherent conditions of sub-organization by departments tended to obscure recognition of the process and to militate against its realization He emphasized his belief in the need for integration, saying that "if the country is to go on getting in requisite measure the service it needs from the establishments of the Crown, the ideal of a Service must be fostered and supported in all ways possible and thereby traditions and experience be broader and deeper based"² Before the same Commission representatives of certain sections of the Service criticized the prevalence of departmental classes, and expressed a wish that they should be assimilated to the standard form of organization³

Some Departmental Classes, such as those employed by the Ministry of Labour, are engaged on work which is different from that of the General Clerical Classes, and therefore cannot be conveniently assimilated to them In other departments the nature of the work is similar There are two important differences in the conditions common in the General Grades and in the Departmental Classes. First, in the General Grade there is a different scale of pay in London and in the provinces, whereas in the Departmental Grades there is one scale The single scale facilitates mobility, which is an advantage in the organization of the outpost stations of the Admiralty and War Department Secondly, whereas there is a single scale of pay for the General Clerical Class, with a maximum of £250, the scale is divided in the Departmental Classes Some staff representatives maintained that the cheapness of this arrangement was one of the main reasons for the retention of the classes⁴ On the other hand, certain official representatives held that it would be hard to justify the payment of the higher scale where there were large amounts of routine work to be done, such as at the Mercantile

¹ For a list of the Departmental Classes, see *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence*, Appendix II, para 11

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence*, p 1267.

³ *Ibid*, Appendix 27

⁴ *Ibid*, evidence of W J Brown, M P, General Secretary to the Civil Service Clerical Association, p 287, Q 4970

Marine Department of the Board of Trade, where the routine work was ancillary to that done by the technical surveying service ¹

The Tomlin Commissioners expressed themselves satisfied with existing arrangements, and held the view that uniformity in organization and grading could not be carried any further in the Service at the time, and that there should be no standard type of departmental clerical organization, but that variations should be made to meet the needs of the work ²

The establishment of common grades was an essential preliminary to integration. Equally important were the allied questions of control and of the creation of a machinery for dealing with staff and management questions

Treasury control over other departments had hitherto rested in the power of the purse, the right to veto proposals involving expenditure. The various Royal Commissions on the Civil Service had approved of the gradual increase in Treasury control. The manner in which it was exercised had frequently led to friction, and its ultimate fruit was what the Haldane Committee described as "the traditional attitude of hostility between the Treasury and other Departments" ³ There can be no doubt that friction was increased by the rigid departmentalism which existed up to 1919, which had as one consequence the lack in Treasury officers of any personal experience of the traditions and peculiar needs of other departments.

However unenlightened the manner in which the Treasury had exercised its authority, the need for central supervision and co-ordination was clear. The MacDonnell Commissioners were very much aware of this need. They attributed the defects in co-ordination of the methods of recruitment with the educational system to the absence of a controlling authority with more complete information and powers of oversight and initiative ⁴ To remedy this situation they proposed that an Establishments Branch of the Treasury should be created, entrusted with the duty of watching over the general conditions of the Service, making inquiries, bringing their recommendations to the notice of Heads of Departments, and facilitating transfers ⁵ They suggested that the branch should be staffed by officers who had had experience of different branches of

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 1251

² *Ibid.*, Report, paras 153 and 156

³ *Report of the (Haldane) Committee on the Machinery of Government*, P P, 1918, xii, p. 19

⁴ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report*, P P, 1914, xvi, p. 92

⁵ *Ibid.*

the Service. War deferred action, and the matter came up before the Committees concerned with the post-war reconstruction of the Civil Service.

The investigations undertaken by the Committee appointed to inquire into the organization and staffing of Government Offices showed that the relaxation of Treasury control during the Great War led to a good deal of unnecessary expenditure. Many departments had been granted wide discretion in the appointment of their staffs, in deciding both numbers and salary scales. The way in which this discretion had been exercised led the Committee to advocate the resumption of control.¹ They wished, however, to see a different form of control from that exercised before the war, when, they said, Treasury criticism was "too often misinformed and misdirected owing to the reliance placed on written communications."² The Haldane Committee pointed out that the obligation of the spending departments to formulate a full and reasoned statement of their proposals "must be recognized as placing upon the Treasury a corresponding obligation not to assume a negative attitude in the first instance towards suggestions for improving the quality of a service or the efficiency of the staff which administers it."³

The MacDonnell proposals with regard to control and co-ordination were somewhat amplified. Full recognition was given to the importance of questions relating to personnel, such as grading and promotion, and to those bearing upon technical efficiency, such as methods of registering papers and the introduction of labour-saving appliances. The Haldane Committee emphasized their opinion that progressive efficiency could only be secured by the exercise of "constant expert attention." They advocated the appointment in each sufficiently large department of a special officer to deal with the control of staff engaged on routine duties and the creation of a special branch of the Treasury to deal with these questions and to study "all questions of staff, recruitment, classification, etc., and routine business generally." This branch was to keep in constant touch with the officers concerned with "establishment" work on each department.⁴ These recommendations bore fruit in 1919 when the Establishments Department of the Treasury was created, under an officer called the Controller of Establishments, and entrusted

¹ *Report of the Committee appointed to Inquire into the Organization and Staffing of Government Offices, Final Report*, P P, 1919, xi, p 224

² *Ibid*, p 223

³ *Report of the (Haldane) Committee on the Machinery of Government*, P P, 1918, xi, p 20.

⁴ *Ibid*, p 21.

with the duty of sanctioning rates of pay, of controlling salaries, and of issuing general regulations controlling the conduct of the Service. An Establishment Officer was appointed in each of the larger departments. He was made responsible for controlling and adapting the office organization and for dealing with questions of personnel. A Standing Committee of Establishment Officers under the chairmanship of the Controller of Establishments was set up. The purpose of this Committee is to advise the Treasury on all general questions affecting the staffing and organization of the Service and to secure co-operation between the Treasury and the Establishment Officers in the departments.¹

The new machinery came up for review before the Tomlin Commission. It had been in existence for ten years, long enough to show whether it had effected improvements in the methods of co-ordination and in the formerly somewhat frictional relations between the Treasury and other departments. The opinion of witnesses was divided. Some thought that friction had diminished, and that Treasury officers co-operated satisfactorily with their opposite numbers in the departments.² Others considered that Treasury supervision remained over-meticulous.³ The Staff side of the National Whitley Council went so far as to advocate that the control of establishments should be removed altogether from the Treasury⁴ and entrusted to some independent body. Sir Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, who, according to Sir Claud Schuster, had done a great deal to improve the relations between the Treasury and other departments,⁵ said in his evidence that there was some truth in the charge of meticulousness and that it was a tendency which he deplored.⁶ One of the steps he had taken to improve the relations of other departments was to substitute for direct recruitment to the Treasury from the competitive examination for the Administrative Class the transference of men who had had seven or eight years' experience in other offices.⁷ He hoped by this

¹ For fuller details see MUSTOE, N. E. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), pp. 27 and 28.

² Evidence of Sir Horace Wilson, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Labour. *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 776.

³ Statement of 1st Division Civil Servants, *ibid.*, Appendix VIII, and evidence of W. J. Brown, M.P., for the Civil Service Clerical Association, *ibid.*, p. 295.

⁴ Statement of the National Whitley Council Staff Side, *ibid.*, Appendix IV.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1217, Q. 18113.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1278-1279.

⁷ Since the resumption of the Administrative Class examination in 1925 only one man had been directly recruited to the Treasury. *Ibid.*, p. 1283.

means to remedy the lack of understanding which had hitherto existed

The Commissioners pronounced themselves satisfied on the whole with existing arrangements,¹ but pointed out that it was desirable to allow Heads of Departments adequate latitude in staff matters. The only alteration which they advocated was the immediate appointment of a staff, specially trained on the American model, to carry out investigations and to consider the further co-ordination of the machinery of government, with a view to promoting both efficiency and economy. There is no evidence of action having been taken to implement this recommendation.

Whatever may be the defects of the post-war machinery for co-ordinating the Service and for exercising Treasury control, there can be no doubt that the reforms undertaken had resulted in marked progress. Long-established and tenacious traditions of sectionalism have had to be broken down. A staff generation lasts from thirty-five to forty years, so the full benefit of the changes brought about in the past fifteen years are not yet fully apparent.

Relations of Employer and Employed

As the Civil Service expanded, the question of the relation between the State as employer and the Civil Servant as employee became increasingly important. In theory the only legitimate channel of negotiation between State and Civil Servant was through the Heads of Departments. We have seen that during the nineteenth century Civil Servants brought their grievances to public notice by two means: memorials, and the enlistment of the interest of Members of Parliament. These methods were not ineffective. By means of memorials, associations of Civil Servants induced the Government to adopt the Superannuation Act of 1909.² These indirect methods of approach were, however, hardly suitable for dealing with such pressing questions as the conditions of labour and rates of pay affecting large bodies of Civil Servants.

When memorials were ineffective, Civil Servants had to resort to political action to get their claims considered. The disadvantages of this procedure in time induced Governments to devise other means of negotiation. In 1912 a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the wages and conditions of postal servants. The debate which followed the presentation of the Committee's report showed that

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Report*, para. 591.

² *Ibid.*, *Minutes of Evidence*, p. 1514.

many Members doubted the suitability of a Select Committee for dealing with questions of this kind. In 1914 it was proposed to set up two bodies—one an expert body to consider the Select Committee's recommendations, another to consider the future relations of the State with its employees. The latter was never appointed before war broke out. However, with the rise in prices, controversy over wage rates became more acute, war made it essential to avoid open conflict. Consequently, in 1916 the Prime Minister announced in the House that the Government had decided to set up a standing arbitration tribunal to decide during the war questions of wages arising between the Government and its civil employees. The tribunal's duties included conciliation as well as arbitration. Between 1917 and 1923, ninety-one claims were dealt with by conciliation and one hundred and thirty-one by arbitration.¹

Compulsory arbitration involved some surrender of control over rates of pay by the Government, and at the same time prevented Parliamentary agitation over claims at a time when such agitation would have been inconvenient.

In 1917 the Whitley Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction considered the question of the relations between employers and employed. There was at that time a genuine desire to find some means of reducing the bitterness of the conflict between these two groups and an optimistic belief that a means of intelligent co-operation could be devised. From this mood sprang the Whitley reports, which proposed the creation of joint councils of employers and employed, representing different sections of each industry, to settle wage claims and consult over working conditions. The Whitley Committee declared that their recommendations were applicable not only in industrial relations, but also in the relations of the State and municipalities to their employees. The Government was reluctant to accept the validity of this view, but the House of Commons urged that if they refused to apply the recommendations in their own departments, their adoption by industry would be greatly hampered. The Government still hesitated. They appointed a Committee to reconsider the matter. The Committee recommended that the functions of Whitley Councils in Government departments should be purely consultative. This compromise, which would have made the Councils useless as well as powerless, was received coldly. The Government then referred the matter to an Interdepartmental

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix I.* •

Committee In 1919 this Committee unanimously recommended the adoption of the Whitley report¹ "We conceive," they said, "the main objects of establishing a system of Whitley Councils for the Administrative Departments are to secure a greater measure of co-operation between the State, in its capacity as employer, and the general body of Civil Servants in matters affecting the Civil Service, with a view to increased efficiency in public service combined with the well-being of those employed, to provide machinery for the ventilation of grievances, and generally to bring together, with a view to free discussion of many diverse and complex problems, the experience and different points of view of representatives of the many grades and classes constituting the administrative, clerical and manipulative Civil Service of the Country"²

The Government accepted this report, thereby recognizing for the first time the desirability of securing the co-operation of Civil Servants in the organization of the Service

A National Whitley Council was created to deal with questions affecting the Service as a whole and with classes common to the Service The Council consists of an official side, representing the State and composed in the main of high officials, and a staff side, made up of representatives appointed by various staff organizations³ Departmental Councils were set up in seventy departments to deal with matters peculiar to the staffs of those departments These, too, are divided into two sides.

The first important piece of work which the National Council undertook was the preparation of the Reorganization Report. The Committee was fully aware of the significance of the work entrusted to them Their inquiry, they said, marked the recognition of a new principle of co-operation. "That a group of persons drawn from every part of a graded Service of the Crown should be able to present an agreed report upon the form and shape of their Service

¹ *Report of the Sub-Committee of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Application of the Whitley Report to Government Establishments*, P P, 1919, xi

² *Ibid*, p 229

³ The Official Side must include at least one representative of the Treasury and one of the Ministry of Labour Except for three M P s, it has consisted entirely of Civil Servants, all of whom, except the Secretaries, have been Permanent Heads of Departments They are appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer The three M P s are chosen from the party in power In general, half the members of the Staff Side have been whole-time officers of the staff associations and half serving Civil Servants See *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence*, Appendix I

For a detailed study of the subject, see WHITE, L. D. *Whitley Councils in the British Civil Service* (1933)

is a notable achievement"¹ The report was accepted and many of its regulations implemented

Compulsory arbitration was instituted at a time when disputes would have been particularly embarrassing to the Government Whitley Councils came into being at a time when there was a spirit of optimism abroad, and a desire to provide in the plans for national reconstruction measures which would mitigate some of the more glaring pre-war evils

Compulsory arbitration was regarded as a temporary expedient, and the scheme terminated in May 1923² A large number of Civil Servants favoured the retention of arbitration After some discussion the Government accepted the principle and that the machinery should be the Industrial Court created by the Act of 1919 Between 1925 and 1929 one hundred and forty-eight disputes were settled by arbitration

When the machinery came up for review before the Tomlin Commission, staff representatives urged the need for certain modifications They wished to see the Industrial Court's jurisdiction extended to cover questions of grading The Commissioners, however, pronounced themselves satisfied with existing arrangements, recommending only amendment of certain matters of detail

The National Whitley Council has not been entrusted with any work of comparable importance to the Reorganization Report None the less its sub-committees have considered a wide range of subjects, including promotion and superannuation. The development of the Whitley system has been less smooth than might have been anticipated from the optimistic forecasts made at its inception There has been friction over the allocation of seats on both the National and Departmental Councils³ After the General Strike of 1926 representatives of certain staff organizations withdrew from the National Council.⁴

Witnesses before the Tomlin Commission agreed that the Depart-

¹ *Report of the National Whitley Council Reorganization Committee* (1920), p. 1

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence*, Appendix I, p. 95 No fresh claims were accepted after February 22, 1922

³ Trouble arose in 1927 in the Post Office Whitley Council over the recognition of an Association to which a substantial number of sorters belonged Two Unions strongly objected to this recognition and withdrew their representatives Representatives of certain women's associations withdrew from the National Council at an early date *Ibid.*, p. 101

⁴ These were the representatives of the Joint Consultative Committee, which includes the Association of 1st Division Civil Servants, the Civil Service Legal Society, and the Association of H.M.'s Inspectors of Taxes

mental Whitley Councils had done useful work. There was, however, considerable difference of opinion as to the value of the National Council. Representatives of the official side were disappointed with its working.¹ Some witnesses even went so far as to assert that the machinery was unnecessary.² Some impatience is perhaps understandable. The Council is a large body, comprising fifty-four representatives, with a quorum of twenty-eight. The persons composing it hold widely divergent views. It is not to be wondered at that deliberations are long drawn out, and that it takes time to agree to decisions. No doubt the machinery of the Whitley system is capable of considerable improvement, no doubt also that the situation which has resulted from the introduction of a mechanism for discussion and conciliation is an appreciable advance on conditions existing before 1919. Indeed, the introduction of means of arbitration and conciliation may be regarded as the principal contribution of the twentieth century to the evolution of Civil Service machinery.

Women in the Civil Service

The story of women Civil Servants has been well told; it would be superfluous to repeat it here.³ Yet this history of the development of the Civil Service would be incomplete without a brief reference to the use which the State has made of the services of women.

As we have already seen, in the course of the nineteenth century women were allowed to fill subordinate clerical posts, since they were cheap and excellent value for the money. Their posts were special female posts. They worked neither in the same grades as men, nor in competition with them in any way. They were segregated, and employed only whilst unmarried.

As the years passed women claimed to be granted or refused posts on their merits. This claim roused violent emotions of antagonism in the male Civil Servants and in those in authority. Their attitude is well illustrated by the evidence given by the first Civil Service Commissioner before the MacDonnell Commission. Asked whether he saw any reason why women should not be admitted to the Civil Service examinations, he replied that it was "a very revolutionary proposal," and when pressed for reasons why university women should not compete for the Class I examinations he declared

¹ Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Report, para. 49, Minutes of Evidence, p. 449.

² Ibid., p. 1514.

³ MARTINDALE, HILDA *Women Servants of the State* (1938).

that competition was bad for women¹ There was nothing exceptional in this attitude Those women who were employed were efficient, but few men in authority had any desire to make further use of their services.

On many subjects the MacDonnell Commissioners were by no means illiberal in their attitudes On the subject of women, however, they were in no way advanced They rejected the idea that differences in sex should be ignored in the recruitment of Civil Servants, they advocated that where women were employed they should be segregated from their male colleagues, they upheld the practice of requiring all women to resign on marriage.²

Necessity succeeded in overcoming prejudices where argument had failed During the Great War women filled the places in the Service vacated by men who had joined the armed forces Whereas in 1914 there were 65,000 women in the Service, of whom 58,000 were employed in the Post Office non-clerical grades, in 1919 there were 170,000 women, of whom many were employed in departments which had been exclusively staffed by men before the war³

When the various Committees came to consider the post-war reorganization of the Civil Service, they had to take into account the facts relating to women's work. The Haldane Committee stated in their report that the particular question of whether suitable women could be found to perform the duties assigned to Class I men had "to a large extent found an answer in the experience of the last four years." They therefore concluded that it was no longer expedient in the public interest to exclude women on the ground of sex, either from those posts entered by the Class I examination or from other situations entered by competition⁴ This view prevailed, despite the equivocation of the Gladstone Committee, which sought to prove that the war years had provided no suitable data upon which a decision could be made⁵

War experience had shown the capabilities of women, and also that no disastrous effects followed from failure to segregate them in

¹ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence, P P*, 1912-13, xv, p 122

² Chapter vii of their 4th Report is devoted to the subject of women

³ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix I*, p 113

⁴ *Report of the (Haldane) Committee on the Machinery of Government, P P*, 1918, xii, p 13

⁵ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix I*, p 115 .

their work. This latter consideration was important, since the difficulties of organizing separate female departments had frequently been put forward as a reason for not employing women.

At the same time as women were asking for the recognition of their ability to fill Civil Service posts an acute labour problem was arising. After the war many departments reduced their staffs. The temporary work which had been the result of the war came to an end. At the same time, the returning survivors from the armed forces claimed a right to posts in the Service.

The attitude of the State to women was clarified in 1919 by the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, which provides that "a person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial post."

The laying down of this principle was not followed by the opening of the Service to women unconditionally, nor by the lifting of the marriage bar. What happened was that in 1921 the Treasury drew up regulations which controlled the admission of women to the Service. They were excluded from the Foreign Office and from the Diplomatic Service. They were allowed to compete in the examinations. It was stipulated that all women candidates for the Service should be single or widows, and that they should resign on marriage. Exception to this rule could only be made on the recommendation of the Head of a Department if the Civil Service Commissioners and the Treasury (in the case of a recruit) and the Treasury (in the case of an officer holding an established position) considered the exemption in the public interest. It was stipulated further that all exemptions should be published in the *London Gazette*.¹

The outcome as regards recruitment is that certain posts and grades in the Service are reserved to men, that in regard to classes common to the Service, whilst women are eligible to compete for places on equal terms with men, they are not eligible to fill all the posts filled from the examination.

Over the marriage bar there has been considerable difference of opinion. The issues are simple, but differ for varying kinds of work. Women have shown no unanimity in their own judgments on the question.

As regards the routine work, shorthand-typing and the like, clearly there is no detriment to the Service, and considerable advantage to junior members of the grades, if there is a rapid turnover

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service* (1931), para. 421.

of labour. The lower grades of the Service have shown themselves hostile to the employment of married women.

On the other hand, the issues are different as regards those who have undergone a long training and have acquired valuable experience and skilled techniques.

The retirement of highly qualified officers, such as inspectors with years of experience, is a loss to the State. Moreover, women who have devoted many years of their life to acquiring specialist qualifications are far more likely to want to carry on their work after marriage than are routine workers. Women of this kind did not show hostility to their married colleagues.

The Tomlin Commissioners discussed the issues raised in considerable detail. They found that the bar had been raised on one occasion only under the existing regulations,¹ the alternatives before them were to retain the existing regulations, to raise the bar completely, or to differentiate between the different grades of the Service, and retain it for the routine workers, who themselves favoured retention, and raise it for the highly qualified, who wished to see the bar removed. After some discussion they recommended the retention of the existing ruling, but a modification of the Treasury regulations which would make it less difficult for a specially qualified woman to retain her post. As a result of this modification eight women have been retained in the Service after marriage between 1934 and 1938.²

The Civil Service has opened its ranks to women—perhaps grudgingly, and certainly upon terms. Undoubtedly those terms have been dictated by the prevailing level of prejudice in the country.

The Great War and the Civil Service

After the Great War ex-Service men claimed admission to the Civil Service upon special terms. The classes of men mainly affected were those without high educational qualifications, who in peacetime would have competed for places in the routine and clerical grades on leaving school. Justice had to be done to these men, and at the same time care taken that the efficiency of the Service should not be impaired by the admission of those who, though they might have competed for places in normal conditions, would most certainly

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, para. 422. The first use made of the provision was in March 1931.

² MARTINDALE, HILDA *Women Servants of the State* (1938), p. 156 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

not have gained them. A suitable form of examination had to be devised, for it was clear that demobilized men, whose education had long ceased, could not be expected to sit for the kind of examination usually taken by boys and girls leaving school.

The admission by examination of men of mature age has always been fraught with difficulties, the ex-Service men proved no easier to deal with than had the writers in years gone by. There was considerable political agitation in favour of the ex-Service men's claims

A number of Committees discussed the points at issue. The first principle to be established was that from 1919 existing temporary staffs should be replaced by disabled and ex-Service men, and that in future all temporary staffs should be recruited from these sources¹

Meanwhile special competitions were devised for those ex-Service men who wished to join the permanent established Service. Clerical posts were reserved for those recruited by means of these competitions. Thereby a number of men were absorbed. There were, however, men who failed, there were also some on the temporary staffs who wished to secure the benefits of establishment. On the recommendation of the Southborough Committee a further competition took place, and none but ex-Service men were allowed to compete for clerical posts until 1924. But the men were still unsatisfied, eight thousand men remained who either failed in the tests or did not compete. Political agitation continued until a final settlement was reached by the so-called "Guinness Agreement" of 1925, which created a special class of ex-Service men—comprising this eight thousand. Their posts were made permanent, but they did not become entitled to superannuation.

As a result of all this, clerical posts in the Service were not thrown open to competition until 1927. Sections of ex-Service men have joined an ex-Service Civil Service Association, instead of merging with their appropriate classes. Their association appears to aim at securing special privileges for them, both in comparison with those who had previously joined the Civil Service and those who might join in the future. One witness before the Tomlin Commission pointed out that they appeared to proceed on a series of *ad misericordiam* appeals²

¹ This decision was taken on the findings of the Ramsay Committee, which reported in July 1919.

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service (1931) Minutes of Evidence*, p. 451.

The ex-Service question resembles in many ways questions of special groups of Civil Servants which had to be met in the nineteenth century. It differs in that the group is one to which the nation as a whole was under obligation. Whether the methods adopted to meet that obligation were in the best interests of the men concerned and of the Service may, of course, be debated. It was inevitable that the Service, like other departments of national life, should suffer the scars of war.

Twentieth-Century Survey

The numbers of Civil Servants increased with the expansion in the functions of government, and the Service played an increasingly important role in the national life. As the years passed it was apparent that the foundations had been soundly laid in the nineteenth century.

Recruitment by open competitive examination stood the test of time. Patronage was kept in check by this means, and by the vigilance of Parliament and of those Commissions which were set up from time to time to consider the Civil Service. Experience led people to recognize certain weaknesses in examinations. They are no longer regarded as an infallible means of assessing accurately the relative abilities of a number of candidates tested in a great variety of subjects. Educationalists continue to argue what is the best kind of syllabus for the purpose. Yet, despite certain shortcomings, the examination system has proved the most impartial, the least corruptible, and the most reliable method of selecting recruits for the various grades of the Service.

In order for the examinations to select in all grades the most suitable candidates the country can provide, there must be a satisfactory relationship between the Service and the educational system. As the MacDonnell Commissioners so clearly perceived, it is essential to have an efficient educational ladder if the Service is to secure the selection of recruits which it requires, and to be democratic, in the sense of reserving its prizes for no particular social or income grouping, but to open them to all citizens with the requisite talent.

As the numbers of its servants increased, the State had to face many of the problems which confront municipal and private employers. Thus there arose the question of boy labour.

Both the Playfair and Ridley Commissions had recommended the use of boys to do the routine copying work.¹ These boys were recruited by open competitive examination, taken between the ages

¹ See *ante*

of 15 and 16¹ Their service terminated when they reached the age of 18. A certain proportion of the boys secured permanent posts in the Service, for they could compete in the Second Division examinations, and their years of service counted in their favour, and they also supplied the "Assistant Clerks" with new recruits. This grade was recruited exclusively from competitions amongst boy clerks. There were, however, numbers who found no permanent work in the Service, and were consequently thrown on to the labour market at the age of 18, having followed a blind-alley occupation which had provided them with no training nor equipped them with any skill which might facilitate their absorption into other occupations.² The situation was aggravated by the absence of any Treasury regulation establishing a proportion between the number of boys admitted in any year and the number of vacancies in the grades to which they could pass.³

There had been Civil Servants who had felt the position of these boys acutely, and had founded a friendly society designed to supervise their welfare and help them to find posts when they were discharged. Though this society did much to ameliorate the boys' lot, they could not do anything to alter the fundamental conditions of a blind-alley occupation.

The MacDonnell Commission took extensive evidence on the problems arising from the employment of boys. Both the evidence and their recommendations showed opinion had changed radically in the course of the years which had elapsed since the boy clerks had first entered the Service. The existence of these blind-alley jobs was condemned without reserve. The complete abolition of the class was advocated, on the grounds that it was undesirable to have in the Service boys who had to undergo the strain of work by day and study for the competitive examinations by night, that it was not justifiable for the Government to induce boys to withdraw prematurely from their secondary school careers in order to follow an occupation which might lead to nothing and was in no way conducive to their welfare, that the promotion of blind-alley occupation by the Government was highly undesirable.⁴

The boy clerks were done away with. Boy messengers were employed in decreasing numbers and an adult post is guaranteed to

¹ Before 1908 the age limits for entry had been from 15-18, and the service terminated when they reached 20.

² *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service, 4th Report, P P, 1914, xiv, p. 38.*

³ *Ibid., Minutes of Evidence, P P, 1912-13, xv, p. 293.*

⁴ *Ibid., 4th Report, P P, 1914, xvi, p. 39.*

every entrant¹ Thus the Government dealt boldly and radically with the question of the employment of juveniles

Arbitration and the Whitley machinery provided superior methods for dealing with such labour questions as wages, conditions and hours than those in general use outside the Service.

With regard to the employment of women, the Service has kept abreast with, though in no way advanced upon, the practice in other organizations

It may fairly be claimed that the Service has shown itself capable of adaptation to changing circumstances The most dramatic features in its development took place in the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth there have been notable improvements The Service remains one of the most characteristic of British constitutional and political institutions.

¹ *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence*, p. 245

CHAPTER XIV

SUPERANNUATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Superannuation Act of 1859 and its amending Acts provided that Civil Servants who fulfilled certain conditions should receive a pension on retirement, and that this pension should be on a non-contributory basis. The Act, which was based on the recommendations of the Commission of 1857, was a triumph for those members of the Service who had protested against the previous arrangements, whereby superannuation was financed from deductions from salaries, which were not returnable to those who retired without fulfilling their term of service or to dependents of those who died before their service was completed. When the Commissioners recommended the abolition of the deductions, they rejected a proposal brought forward by certain members of the Service, which provided for the pensioning of dependents of those who died before they were entitled to be pensioned.

For many years Civil Servants tried to bring about an amendment of the law. They argued that a pension is deferred pay, and that the representatives of an officer who died in service or shortly after his retirement should be entitled to draw upon it.¹ In 1898 they sent a Memorial to the Treasury, setting out their views, and quoting the practice adopted by those large industrial undertakings, such as railways, which had introduced superannuation schemes. At the time the Treasury rejected the proposal on three main grounds: that Civil Servants should cover the risk of premature death by insurance; that the scheme would involve greater reductions from salaries, since the interest on Government securities was $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in contrast to the 4 per cent earned by railway stocks, that the taxpayer could not in fairness be asked to provide the additional expenditure.

The refusal did not lead those interested to abandon their claim. Although many Service benevolent funds and insurance schemes had been created to meet cases of hardship, a more general provision

¹ *Return of a 'Memorial with respect to Superannuation addressed to the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury by Civil Servants of the Crown and a Copy of Reply thereto, dated January 16, 1899, P P, 1899, lxxviii*

was desired. Since there was no machinery for negotiation, associations of clerks sent signed memorials to the heads of their departments¹

In 1903 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire whether it was possible "so to amend the existing system of superannuation in the Civil Service of the State as to confer greater and more uniform advantages upon those to whom it applies without increasing the burden which it imposes upon the taxpayer."²

A majority of the Commission admitted that there were valid reasons for the dissatisfaction felt with the existing arrangements. They noted that municipal bodies and commercial companies which had recently introduced superannuation schemes had supplementary provisions which provided cash payments in the case of death and certain other contingencies. They recommended that the existing basis for pensions should remain, but that the calculations should be made on an amended scale, so that there would be funds for the payment of cash benefits to the representatives of those who died in the Service or shortly after retiring, and also to those who retired for reasons of ill-health³.

The report was not unanimous, and no action was taken upon it until 1909. In that year a Superannuation Act was passed, based on the Commissioners' proposals, but granting rather more generous terms than had been suggested in 1903.⁴ The provisions did not cover women. Associations of women Civil Servants had asked that they should remain under the Act of 1859.⁵

¹ In evidence before the Tomlin Commission, Sir Alfred Woodgate paid a high tribute to the work of these associations, as being instrumental to the reform of the Superannuation scheme. *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, Minutes of Evidence 1929-31*, p. 1514.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Superannuation in the Civil Service*, P.P., 1903, xxxiii, p. 212.

³ They proposed that calculations should be based on 1/80 instead of 1/60 of the retiring salary for each year's service, with a maximum of 40/80 instead of 40/60, that a year's salary in cash should be paid to the representatives of those dying in service, to a Civil Servant retiring after forty years' service, that payment of as many fortieths of the retiring salary as he had served years should be made to the Civil Servant who was forced to retire before his service was complete on grounds of ill-health.

⁴ The cash payments were: On retirement for age or ill-health, 1/30 of the retiring salary for each year served, with a maximum of 45/30 or one and a half years' pay, on death in the Service after not less than five years' service, a gratuity to the representatives of the deceased of one year's pay or 1/30 of the final salary for each year served, whichever is the greater.

⁵ MARTINDALE, HILDA. *Women Servants of the State* (1938), p. 174. The author suggests that the following reasons influenced them in making this request: the

Superannuation was reconsidered by the Tomlin Commission. They followed two lines of discussion. They considered the details of the existing scheme to ascertain whether they required amendment. They also devoted a chapter of their report to a reconsideration of the underlying principles of Civil Service superannuation, and proposed that it should be remodelled on a contributory basis.

For the better working of the existing arrangements, they suggested an extension of the principles of the Act of 1909 which would allow a Civil Servant to surrender a portion of his pension in return for the grant of a pension to his wife or dependent, the extension of the provisions of the Act of 1909 to women, a uniform method of reckoning unestablished service for pension purposes; and the creation of reciprocal arrangements with Local Authorities. These proposals concerned details rather than principles. They were introduced by the Superannuation Act of 1935.¹

Although no action was taken on the proposal to make all Civil Service pensions contributory, the arguments brought forward by the Commission are not without interest. They raised once more, in a different form, the old controversy over deductions. The Commissioners pointed out that there was an increasing tendency outside the Service to provide pension schemes which provided for other than office staffs, and included industrial workers, messengers, and those in analogous occupations. At the time the report was presented there were 388,000 whole-time unestablished Civil Servants.² Since the cost of pensioning these people on a non-contributory basis was considered prohibitive, a complete switch-over to a contributory basis was proposed. This contributory scheme, they maintained, was different from the pre-1859 "deductions" in that they proposed that the contributor, or his legal personal representative, should receive in total benefit not less than he had contributed, with the addition of 3 per cent compound interest.

The main interest of these proposals is that they raise afresh points which had been discussed more than once in the course of the history of the Civil Service. Some of these had been examined with care by the Commission of 1857.³ If a pension is on a low rate of salary, which made any diminution in pension rates unacceptable and the fear that if women came under the terms of the new Act the marriage gratuity would be abolished.

¹ 25 & 26 Geo V, c 23

² This figure was composed as follows: 93,000 industrial staff, 12,000 messengers, 14,000 minor manipulative workers, 25,500 clerical and typist staff, and 7,500 miscellaneous. *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service*, PP, 1930-31, p 725

³ See *ante*, p. 157

tributory basis, and a man may withdraw his contributions if he retires for other reasons than ill-health before serving his full term, then a pension is less of an inducement to continuous service than when it is paid on a non-contributory basis, subject to the pensioner having served a given number of years. Whereas the Commissioners of 1857 considered the inducement important, the Tomlin Commissioners appeared to limit to a permanent tenure the importance to those of mature experience in responsible posts.¹

It is also interesting to remember that in the early days of the Civil Service quite a number of departments followed the practice of granting pensions to artificers, messengers, and similar workers. This practice was censured by the Select Committee on Income and Expenditure of 1828,² who regarded such workers as engaged on an entirely different footing from the "Public Servant." Their attitude was supported by their contemporaries.

Looking back, it is interesting to consider the place of superannuation in Civil Service history. The device was first introduced as a way of reducing the temptations to financial speculations to which so many succumbed in the early days. It facilitated the abolition of deputyships and the enforcement of the rule that the duties of an office should be executed in person. It was an inducement to continuous service, and made possible the somewhat delayed enforcement of an age limit, which allowed the Service to disencumber itself of elderly gentlemen of waning powers. Since the granting of a pension is conditional on continuous service, those who are dismissed for misconduct lose their pension rights. It is, therefore, an aid to discipline. In short, it has played an essential part in the development of the Service.

¹ *Report*, op cit, para 716

² See *ante*

CHAPTER XV

THE CIVIL SERVANT AND HIS CONDUCT

The proper functioning of the British political system depends to a large degree on the integrity and political impartiality of the Civil Service, and in the public's confidence that these qualities are being maintained. In the course of years there has grown up a code regulating the conduct of Civil Servants, and restricting their personal activities so as to reduce to a minimum the conflict between public duty and private interest, and to preserve the reputation of the Service.

As we have already seen, the British Civil Servant holds his post permanently, subject to good behaviour.¹ It is his job to carry on the administration of government, whatever the political party in power. He must provide a succession of political chiefs of varying party affiliations with the data for their speeches and with the administrative basis of their decisions. He must faithfully carry out their policy, irrespective of his personal views of its wisdom or unwisdom. The political Ministers must have confidence in the political neutrality of the Civil Servants if the system is to work effectively.

To promote the impartiality of the Service, severe restrictions are imposed upon a Civil Servant's political activities.² Since 1884 Civil Servants standing for Parliament have been required to resign office on presentation of the election address.³ Thus no Ministers are served by openly avowed political opponents. Departmental restrictions of the political activities of Civil Servants go much further than this, and affect those who have no contact whatsoever with the political chiefs. Postal employees may neither serve on election committees nor write nor speak for candidates. They may canvass at election times when not wearing uniform. No Excise

¹ His tenure is permanent in practice, though not in law.

² The laws which provide against Members of Parliament holding offices of profit under the Crown are extremely complex. For a full account see ANSON, W. R. *The Law and Custom of the Constitution* (3rd edition, 1908), vol. 1, chapter iv, pp. 83 ff.

³ *Report of the Committee on the Parliamentary Candidature of Crown Servants*, P P, 1924-25, ix, p. 290.

officer may be a member of any political association, nor canvass nor serve on committees concerned with the election of Members of Parliament. The maintenance of political neutrality is looked upon as a matter of departmental discipline.¹ In establishments under the Admiralty, Army Council, and Air Council which are certified by the Treasury to be predominantly industrial, these prohibitions apply only to those in the supervisory grades. The departmental regulations affecting these matters have to receive Treasury sanction.

The Trades Disputes Act of 1927² placed further restrictions on the activities of Civil Servants. Under Section 5 of this Act a Civil Servant is precluded from being a member, a delegate or representative of "any organization of which the primary object is to influence or affect the remuneration and conditions of employment of its members, unless the organization is an organization of which the membership is confined to persons under the Crown." Civil Servants' associations may not be affiliated to Trade Unions, nor include political objects, nor be associated directly or indirectly with any political or party organization.³ Thus Civil Servants are cut off from the main body of organized labour.

The essential justification for these rules is that if there came about a relaxation in the impartiality of the Civil Service, open competition would, to quote the words of the MacDonnell Commissioners, "prove but a frail barrier against Ministerial patronage in all but the earlier years of service", and "the result would be destructive of what undoubtedly is at present one of the greatest advantages of our administrative system and one of the most honourable traditions of our public life."⁴

A Committee which discussed the political candidature of Civil Servants in 1924 failed to agree on whether or not it was possible to relax existing rules for particular grades. They were, however, satisfied that it was essential for those directly connected with

¹ *Report of the Committee on the Parliamentary Candidature of Crown Servants*, P.P., 1924-25, ix, p. 292.

² 17 & 18 Geo V, c. 22.

³ There are certain mitigations of these rules. The rules do not apply to (i) Civil Servants who had been members of Trade Unions on or for six months prior to July 29th if on April 4, 1927, there had accrued or begun to accrue to them benefits such as disability pension, or insurance against death, etc., (ii) to a Civil Servant, not in a managerial or supervisory position, who before entering the Service belonged to a Trade Union and was entitled to certain benefits, (iii) those who, besides being Civil Servants, are engaged in some other occupation. For full details see MUSTOE, N. B. *Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), pp. 56-57.

⁴ *Royal (MacDonnell) Commission on the Civil Service*, 4th Report, P.P., 1914, xvi, p. 103.

departmental administration to abstain absolutely from political activities. They pointed out that "the step from the Civil Servant politician to the Politicized Civil Service is but a short one"¹ The early history of the Service gives weight to this judgment.

It is interesting to contrast the British system with those in Totalitarian States, where all officials in responsible positions must be active party men. Thus they utilize a completely politicized public service, the complete antithesis to the British system.

There are other dangers than political corruption against which the Service has to safeguard itself. A large part of the Civil Service code aims at preserving their remarkable reputation for financial integrity. It will be remembered that those who inquired into Public Offices at the end of the eighteenth century found gross peculations as common amongst the officers employed in them as amongst the high political officers. The first important step taken to meet these conditions was the reform of the methods of keeping and auditing public accounts. These measures facilitated the detection of misappropriations.

There were, however, other dangers. The Civil Servant, by reason of his position, must frequently come across information which he could use to his own financial advantage. Government contracts pass through his hands. He is open to the temptation of accepting bribes from those to whom his knowledge would be useful.

The early investigators thought that one of the main reasons why men were tempted to indulge in peculations was their insecure financial position and inadequate pay. Consequently, they urged a revision in the scales of pay and the introduction of pensions. At the same time regulations were tightened up. Civil Servants were prohibited from having a financial interest in Government contracts. Nowadays no public contract may be let to a Civil Servant in the contracting department, nor to any partnership of which he is a member. Nor may a Civil Servant accept a directorship, except as nominee of the Government, in any company holding a contract with his department.² He is thus debarred from making money out of Government concerns with which he is directly concerned.

During the nineteenth century it was not unusual for Civil Servants to accept directorships in insurance companies and similar commercial undertakings which demanded their personal attention during

¹ *Report of the Committee on the Parliamentary Candidature of Civil Servants*, P P, 1924-25, ix, p 312

² MUSTOE, N E *Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), p 54

business hours. The Committee which inquired into the Treasury in the middle of the century strongly deprecated this practice¹ In 1849 a Treasury Minute stated that the public was entitled to the whole time of its servants, and that officers must not accept employment as directors requiring their personal attendance elsewhere during office hours.² The Minute was limited in scope, and ignored important aspects of this question. It was undesirable that a Civil Servant should use the authority of his official position to further his private monetary interests. Public confidence in the Service depends to a considerable degree on reliance in its integrity.

The question was raised in the House of Commons in 1882, when Sir Charles Rivers Wilson, Comptroller of the National Debt, allowed his name to appear in advertisements in the Press connected with an issue of bonds of the Eagle Pass and Air Line of Texas. Members asked whether such conduct was permissible whilst he still held office.³ Mr. Gladstone replied that there was no general ruling in the Service on such matters.⁴ Six years later the Ridley Commissioners advocated the general application of the rule which prevailed at the Colonial Office, which prohibited any officer on that establishment from taking part in any way in the management of an insurance society, trading, commercial or financial company of any kind, other than an insurance or benefit society restricted to members of the Civil Service.⁵ This recommendation was not adopted.

To-day there is a general regulation which lays it down that no Civil Servant may accept any part in the management of a concern which would require his attendance between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Departments have it in their power to make supplementary detailed regulations. These departmental regulations are designed to ensure that no officer shall engage in any activity which might impair his usefulness as a public servant or conflict with the interests of his department.⁶

¹ The Committee was "of opinion that this opportunity should be taken of prohibiting the very objectionable practice of public officers being Directors of Life Assurance, Banking and other Commercial Companies, by which they contract obligations inconsistent with their official position, and absent themselves periodically during the hours of business." *Report of the Committees of Inquiry into Public Offices*, P P, 1854, xxvii, p. 42.

² Treasury Minute dated March 22, 1849. *Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, xxvii, p. 429.

³ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 274, pp. 863-864. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1122.

⁵ *Report of the Royal (Ridley) Commission on Civil Establishments*, P P, 1888, p. xxiii.

⁶ MUSTOE, N. E. *The Law and Organization of the British Civil Service* (1932), p. 54.

The Civil Service code is in part embodied in Treasury Minutes and in departmental regulations, in part in custom. The clearest definitions with regard to the standards of conduct demanded of Civil Servants are to be found in a report which was issued by a Board of Inquiry which in 1928 inquired into the case of three eminent officials who became implicated in highly speculative foreign exchange transactions. It declared that the Service exacted a higher standard of honesty than the common, for a Civil Servant might not subordinate his duty to his private interests, nor "put himself in a position where his duty and his interests conflict. He is not to make use of his official position to further these interests, but neither is he so to order his private affairs as to allow the suspicion to arise that a trust has been abused or a confidence betrayed"¹

Any abrogation of the Code is followed by severe penalties. Thus in 1936 the Permanent Secretary of the Air Ministry was dismissed after a Board of Inquiry had found that he had interlarded public negotiations entrusted to him with the advancement of his personal and private interests,² by using the opportunities afforded by his official interviews for attempting to secure an important position in a company with which his department had important contracts and relations.

It is the strict maintenance of the Civil Service Code, the prompt infliction of penalties on those who contravene it, that contribute to the preservation of the integrity and reputation of a remarkable institution.

¹ *Report of Board of Inquiry to Investigate Certain Statements, etc*, P P, 1928, vii, pp 535-536

² *Report of the Board of Inquiry*, P P, 1935-36, vii

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

The history of the British Civil Service shows that its structure has been modified from time to time to meet the changing administrative needs of the country. In the future, as in the past, the value of the Service will depend to a large extent on its power to maintain its standard of efficiency, integrity and impartiality, and likewise on its adaptability. Just as in the nineteenth century the expanding functions of government and the changing standards of education made it necessary to revise the organization and methods of staffing administrative offices, so we may expect the conditions of the twentieth century to call for further modifications and adjustments.

The tradition of the Service is against violent change. The full effects of altered policies are not realized for some years after they have been introduced. The value of this tradition has been proved in the past. Its existence makes it incumbent upon those responsible constantly to bear the needs of the future in mind, and to cater as far as intelligence and foresight allows for the probable requirements of the next thirty years. For it is from the recruits of 1939 that the Permanent Secretaries of 1970 will be chosen.

The tendency to specialization, apparent in the nineteenth century, has become more marked in the twentieth century. Fields of knowledge have been divided up: the importance of the work of the expert and technician is now generally recognized. In agriculture, in industry, in public health, even in finance, the fruits of increased knowledge can be applied to contemporary problems. Whereas in the middle of the nineteenth century the Government recognized the need for the professional services of but few specialists—and amongst these the lawyer predominated, in 1931 the Tomlin Commissioners estimated that there were some ten thousand engineers, scientists, doctors and other specialists employed in the Civil Service.¹ These specialists belong to a special grading in the Service.

¹ They calculated there were 10,200 officers possessing recognized scientific, professional or technical qualifications, and 11,500 subordinate officers, not necessarily possessing such qualifications, such as draughtsmen, technical assistants, etc. *Report of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1931* paras 171 and 172.

There can be no doubt that at one time the "specialist" officer in the Civil Service was looked on as a subordinate by his administrative colleagues, and his opinions insufficiently consulted. Sir Arthur Newsholme noted an "honest belief, common to many Government Departments, that technical advice is advice not to be given until called for by the secretariat who, it is assumed, are entirely competent to decide whether such advice is needed,"¹ and that such advice once recorded, it was assumed that it could be re-applied in what were regarded by the secretariat as analogous circumstances.²

At the Board of Agriculture the subordinate position of the technical staff is emphasized by the Treasury's refusal to allow that they should be paid on a basis of equality with the corresponding administrative officers.³

This attitude has not always been general. When the Ministry of Health was created in 1919, Sir Robert Morant, the first Permanent Secretary, took steps to ensure adequate status and authority for the medical staff by securing the grant to the Chief Medical Officer of the same salary and status as the Permanent Secretary, and the right of direct access to the responsible Minister.⁴ Apparently there has been some modification in this policy. Recent figures show that the present Chief Medical Officer of Health is paid on a lower scale than the Permanent Secretary, and differentiation in salary may be taken to imply differentiation in status.⁵

The importance of the relation between the technical and non-technical staff is greater in some departments than in others. In the Post Office it is of paramount importance, since the work of the department depends largely on scientific discoveries and developments and their practical application. In 1932 the Bridgeman Committee, which was appointed to inquire into the Post Office, discussed the question in detail, and their findings are significant. They were dissatisfied with the training of the administrative staff, which was recruited through the Administrative Class examination, and found that they had "inadequate opportunity to acquire any thorough

¹ NEWSHOLME, SIR ARTHUR *The Last Thirty Years in Public Health* (1936), p. 62. The author was Chief Medical Officer to the Local Government Board from 1908-19.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Minutes of Evidence of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31*, p. 1112. Evidence of the Association of Scientific Workers.

⁴ NEWMAN, SIR GEORGE *The Building of a Nation's Health* (1939), pp. 119 and 112.

⁵ The present Chief Medical Officer receives £2,200 a year, and the Permanent Secretary £3,000.

training in, or experience of, the actual executive work of the Post Office."¹ The secretariat not only administered, but to a considerable extent controlled, the executive service of which it had little practical knowledge. The Committee believed that engineering experience was insufficiently brought into consideration in the formulation of policy.²

The remedies which they proposed included an adequate training of the administrative staff after recruitment. They advocated that no officer should fill a responsible post at Headquarters until he had had a thorough training in and experience of Post Office work in the provinces; that after some service at Headquarters he should return to a more responsible post in the provinces, and that he should be returned again to Headquarters only if he continued to develop satisfactorily as an administrator.³ By these means they hoped to bring about the necessary co-ordination and cohesion of the work.

The Committee sought also to find means of breaking down the rigid barrier between the technical and administrative staff. "As regards access to administrative posts," they said, "we consider that there should be no bar to a technical officer holding such posts, provided he has shown himself to possess administrative ability."⁴

They further recommended that a Functional Board for the Post Office should be set up, to be presided over by the Postmaster-General, comprising four or five of the Post Office staff having authority over the various activities of the Department.⁵ Such a Board ensures that the presiding Minister has the opportunity of giving due consideration to technical matters in the forming of his policy.

Clearly, in an age where expert technical knowledge plays an increasingly important part in life, it is of the utmost importance that a satisfactory relationship should be established between the specialist and administrative staffs, and that those in responsible administrative posts should give due weight to technical considerations.

¹ *Committee of Inquiry on the Post Office, P P*, 1931-32, xxx, para 99, p 769

² *Ibid.*, para 100

³ *Ibid.*, para 120, p 774

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 122, p 775 "Generally speaking," they went on, "we think it to be true that the specialist in any walk of life tends to remain a specialist, but there are of course well-known exceptions to the contrary, and we consider that when a member of a technical staff has shown that he possesses administrative talent he should be eligible for other appointments."

⁵ It was suggested that such functions might be represented as General Operating and Supply, Engineering and Research, Finance, Personnel, etc. *Ibid.*, para 109

One writer has asserted that in the most important spheres of public service the distinction between "administrative" and "professional" staffs is obsolete.¹ This is perhaps a somewhat extreme view. It has been pointed out that the anxiety of the expert Civil Servant is that adequate use shall be made of his special service.² In their evidence before the Tomlin Commission, the Institute of Professional Civil Servants urged that there should be an extension of the Board system, and that the specialist should have the right of access to the Minister on all important questions involving technical considerations. The Commission did not endorse this view, maintaining that the Permanent Secretary must be the officer responsible to the Minister. They advised that there should be periodic conferences presided over by the Minister or Permanent Head of the Department, and attended by the heads of all branches.³ Their findings, which appeared before the publication of the Bridgeman Committee Report, contributed little to the solution of the general problem.

Probably no one machinery is appropriate to all departments. Some have been quicker than others to realize the need for professional co-operation. Thus the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education came into existence when the Board was set up in 1899. Perhaps the changes in the Post Office will encourage the other departments to attempt improvements suited to their particular needs.

The readiness of Governments to make adequate use of technical knowledge must depend largely on the attitude of the Administrative Class of the Civil Service, and the attitude of the Administrative Class is determined to some extent by the conditions of admission to that class. The examination which determines the selection of officers is still largely dominated by the educational principles of Macaulay and Jowett.⁴ Modifications in the syllabus have, as we have seen, reduced to some extent the weighting in favour of the classicist or the mathematician.⁵ The underlying ideas are the same. By means of competitive examinations the nineteenth-century

¹ ROBSON, W. A. (editor) *Public Enterprise* (1937), p. 375.

² NEWMAN, SIR GEORGE *The Building of a Nation's Health* (1939), p. 109.

³ *Report of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, P.P.*, 1930-31, x, para. 177.

⁴ For a description of these see *ante*, pp. 80, 81.

⁵ In their evidence before the Tomlin Commission the Association of Scientific Workers pointed out that only about one in twenty successful candidates in the open competition for the Administrative Class has a science degree and that very few had a degree in economics. *Minutes of Evidence of the Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, 1929-31*, p. 1104.

reformers hoped to select "young men superior in talents or diligence to the mass" They considered that such men were likely to be those who excelled in whatever it was the fashion of the age to teach That is why they favoured in their own day the classicist and the mathematician

Since those days there have been important changes in the nature of the functions of government The Civil Servant does more than control and regulate One author has noted that since 1902 "the central Departments enlarged the purpose of the Civil Service, as guide, philosopher and friend to the Local Authorities and the auxiliary voluntary movements associated with them"¹ The duties of the Local Authorities have become more numerous and more positive To supervise their powers in such fields as housing and town planning demands a different kind of knowledge from that which sufficed for the days of simple regulation In agriculture, in health, in education, the Departments not merely restrain, they encourage certain forms of activity

These facts, together with the growth of the importance of expert knowledge, have led people to consider possible modifications in existing practice Some have favoured an alteration in the subjects of examination for the Administrative Class competition which include a greater emphasis on the social sciences and the inclusion of the history of science and scientific method Those who excelled in these subjects would, they feel, be the kind of persons needed to carry on the business of government of the modern State Others prefer some scheme of post-entry training comparable to that outlined in the Bridgeman Report There seems no reason why such training should not be both theoretical and practical

The close relation of the Central Departments and the Local Authorities make it probable that it would be an advantage if it were possible to include in the Central Departments officers with local experience The Tomlin Commissioners pointed out that under the then existing arrangements officers pensionable under Local Government schemes forfeited their rights on transfer to the Civil Service They recommended the adoption of an arrangement whereby Civil Servants could be appointed to posts under Local Authorities, and officers of Local Authorities to posts in the Civil Service, with continuity of pension rights² Their recommendation was embodied in a clause of the Superannuation Act of 1935. A wide use of the

¹ NEWMAN, SIR GEORGE *The Building of a Nation's Health* (1939), p. 103.

² *Royal (Tomlin) Commission on the Civil Service, P.P., 1930-31, x*

powers of interchange seems unlikely whilst municipalities continue to recruit their officers without any common standards of qualification or of methods of recruitment

There is another aspect of the extension of the functions of government which requires consideration. During recent years increasing use has been made of public service organizations which are semi-independent, although their governing bodies are appointed by the Government, bodies such as the Coal Mines Reorganization Commission, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Central Electricity Board, etc. These organizations are not absorbed into the departments, nor staffed by Civil Servants, nor have they a politician at their head. It has been pointed out that there is no clearly defined distinction between the kind of functions assigned to one of these publicly controlled bodies and those assigned to a department.¹ The growth of these bodies may be expected to react upon the future development of the Civil Service.

There exists a great disparity between the salaries of highly placed Civil Servants and those in control of the newly created bodies. The most highly paid Civil Servant is the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, who receives £3,500 a year. This is exactly half the salary paid to the Chairman of the Coal Mines Reorganization Commission,² whose responsibilities are not of comparable importance. In the past the differences in salaries enjoyed in the various departments hampered the development of the Civil Service. It may be that in the future the preferential treatment given to those in public services outside the Civil Service may react unfavourably on recruitment.

The methods by which these recently created bodies recruit their staffs vary.³ In no instance has the Civil Service pattern been adopted. No doubt each body chooses the method which it considers will secure it the kind of personnel it requires. Yet in the future it cannot be a matter of indifference to the public how these great new organizations are staffed, the scales of pay they adopt, etc. A complex situation is arising which some consider may lead to grave difficulties.⁴ Certainly, from the point of view of the future of the Service, it is highly desirable that a proper relationship should be established

¹ ROBSON, W. A. (editor) *Public Enterprise* (1937), p. 362.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 372.

³ See, for such details as are known, an essay by HERMAN FINER, "The Personnel of the Semi-Public Services," which is chapter VII in *The British Civil Servant* (1937), editor W. A. ROBSON.

⁴ ROBSON, W. A. (editor) *Public Enterprise* (1937), p. 373 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).

between the public and the semi-public services, and that the high prizes offered in the newer bodies should not be allowed to detract from the prestige of the Service nor discourage recruitment

There are important problems for some future Royal Commission to solve. It will have to consider by what means the Service should adapt itself to cater for the increasingly complex needs of contemporary society and make full use of the technical expert. It will have to consider problems of organization. It will have to recommend methods of establishing such a relation between the Civil Service and the new semi-public services that there shall be no danger of a conflict between the two, or of a creeping back of abuses from which the Service was freed by strenuous efforts in the past.

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 Addington, H U, 106, 107 n
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 Admiralty, 30 n, 168, patronage in, 75-6
 Age of Entry, 95, 97 n, 99
 Agencies, 28-9, 40, 42
 Agriculture, Ministry of, 164
 Appointment, *see* Recruitment
 Arbitration, 185, 187
 Army Pay Office, 47
 Associations of Civil Servants, 140, 201
 Attwood, Thos, 55
 Audit—
 Board of, 106
 Commissioners of, 45 n, 47, 50
 Auditing, 31, 37, 47-50
- Balances, banking of, 36
 Bamford, Mr, 129
 Baring, Sir Francis, 84, 91 n
 Bentham, Jeremy, 55
 Blackstone, Sir Wm, 21 n
 Bonds of probity, *see* Fidelity guarantees
 Booth, Mr, 107 n
 Boy clerks, 131-2, 164, 193-4
 Boy writers, *see* Boy clerks
 Boyd, George, 91 n
 Bridgeman Committee, 206-7, 209
 Brietzke, Charles, 26
 Bright, John, 116, 120
 Bromley, R M, 104, 107, 117 n
 Brown, W J, 180, 183 n
 Burke, Edmund, 22, 45, 46, 64
- Cambridge, *see* Universities
 Canning, George, 62
- Chadwick, Edwin, 107-8
Chambers's Journal, 114
 Civil List, 27 n
 Civil Servant, definition, 19
 Civil Servants, conditions of service, 19
 Civil Service—
 creation of, 20
 growth of, 21
 Civil Service Appointments, Select Committee on (1860), 116-119
 Civil Service Commission, 111-12, 115-20 *et passim*
 Civil Service Supply Association, 140
 Civil Service Writers, Select Committee on, 127-8
 Civil Services Expenditure, Select Committee on (1873), 128
Civilian, The, 140
 Clarendon, Lord, 120
 Classical Education, and Examinations, 173
 Cole, Henry, 107 n
 Colebrook, Sir Edward, 84
 Colonial Affairs, Office for, 23
 Commissions of Inquiry, 20
 Competition, Open, 118-22, 130, 139, 143, 150
 Conditions in Public Offices, Commission on, 22
 Conduct of Civil Servants, 200-4
 Contracts, Government, 40, 42, 51, 202
 Control, 30-3, 47-52, 181-4
 Co-ordination, Interdepartmental, 133, 153, 177-84
 Copleston, Bp, 82
 Copying Clerks, 89, 94, 100-1, 125-6
 Copying Press, 125, 131
 Copyists, 142-3, 151
 Corrupt Practices Acts, 19

Cost of Civil Service, 23, 124
 Cramming, 172
 Crimean War, 110
 Customs Service—
 appointments to, 24-5, 76-7
 pensions in, 29, 59
 sinecures in, 53

Degrees, University, Examinations
 for, 82
 Departmental Classes, 179-80
 Dependents' Pensions, 196-8
 Deputy, performance of duties by,
 25-6, 53-4
 Dickens, Chas., 50
 Directorships, holding of, 148 n,
 202-3
 Disraeli, B., 92 n, 113
 Duty pay, 141

East India Company, 78-81
Eclectic Review, 114
 Education, Board of, 163, 167-8
 Consultative Committee, 208
 Education Committee of Privy
 Council, 94, 155
 Education, General, and Examina-
 tion system, 139-40, 172, 193
 Emoluments, 27-30, 39-41, 56-65,
 96-7
 Employer and Employed, 184-8
 Establishments Department of
 Treasury, 182-3
 Examination System at Universities,
 83
 Examinations, 95, 100-2, 107-8,
 117-18, 128, 139, 170-1, 193,
 see also Competition, Open,
 oral, 171
 Exchequer and Audit Act, 124
 Exchequer offices, 49
 Excise—
 Charity Fund, 29 n
 Collection of, 33
 Ex-service men, 191-3
 Extra-Clerks, 89, 94, 126, 168

 Factory Inspectors, 169
 Falkland, Viscount, 32

Farr, Mr., 93 n.
 Fee-funding, 45
 Fees, payment by, 27-8, 39-40, 49,
 58
 Fees and Gratuities, Commission of,
 26, 39-40, 43-4, 46, 51
 Fellowships, University, appoint-
 ments to, 81-3
 Fidelity guarantees, 40 n, 42
 Finance, Select Committee on—
 (1797), 22, 46, 53
 (1817), 55, 60-1
 (1819), 49
 Fisher, Sir Warren, 150, 163 n,
 171, 180, 183
 Folkestone, Lord, 65
 Foreign Department, 23
Fortnightly Review, 120
 Franking, 28
 Freemantle, Sir T. F., 105 n

 General Strike, 187
 Gladstone, W. E., 85, 113, 115, 121,
 203
 Gladstone Committee, 189
 Goderich, Viscount, 114
 Grading of officers, 42 n, 67, 129-
 131, 178-80
 Graham, Sir James, 75-6, 109
 Graham, Major, 106
 Griffiths, Richard, 107 n
 Guinness Agreement, 192

 Haileybury College, 80
 Haldane, Lord, 173
 Haldane Committee, 181-2, 189
 Hamilton, Sir Wm., 82
 Hayter, Sir Wm., 114 n, 115,
 116 n, 118
 Health Insurance Commissions, 167
 Health, Ministry of, 206
 Herbert, Sidney, 110
 Higher Division, 146-7, 149-51
 Hill, Rowland, 104, 107-8
 Holidays, 30, 68-9
 Holland, Lord, 32
 Home Office, 23, 124
 Hours of Work, 30, 147, 151
 Hume, Mr., 55

- Imprest, Auditors of, 30-2, 37-9,
 45 n, 47
 Increments, 59, 61
 Indian Administration, 78-81
 Indian Civil Service, 81, 83
 Industrial Court, 187
 Inefficiency, 71
 Insurance, National, 163-4
 Integrity, Financial, 202-3
 Interview, Competitive, 169, 171-2
 Irish Concordatum Fund, 28

 Jelf, Dr, 108 n
 Jolliffe, Sir Wm, 116 n
 Jowett, Benjamin, 21, 85, 92, 101

 King, Miss G J, 133

 Land Revenue, Auditor of, 53
 Lansdowne, Marquess of, 46
 Larcom, Lt-Col., 107 n
 Latin, use of, 31, 49-50
 Layard, Mr, 112
 Lefevre, J G Shaw, 91, 111 n
 Length of Service, 26
 Letters Patent, 24
 Lewis, Sir G C, 108 n
 Lincoln, Lord, 32 n
 Lingen, R W W, 106, 108, 146
 Local Authorities, Relations with,
 209-10
 Local Government Board, 124
 Lords, House of, and reform, 54
 Lowe, Robert, 83, 85, 116, 121, 126,
 129, 131-2, 138, 170
 Lower Division, 135, 141-2
 grievances of, 141

 Macaulay, Lord, 21, 80, 84, 104, 109
 MacDonnell Commission 165, 167-
 182, 188-9, 194
 Marines, Paymaster of, 48
 Marriage bar, 190-1
 Medical Examinations, 95, 100
 Melville, Lord, 47
 Memorials, 184, 197
 Merivale, Hermann, 108 n.
 Middleton, Sir Chas, 25

 Mill, J S, 104, 107
 Miscellaneous Expenditure, Select
 Committee on, 87-92
 Morant, Sir Robert, 206
 Moseley, Canon, 108 n

 Napier, Capt, 75
 National Whitley Council, 186-8
 Naval departments, sale of offices in,
 25
 Naval Inquiry Commission, 47
 Navy, Treasurer of, 45, 48 n
 Nelson, Lord, 37
 New Year Gifts, 57-8
 Newsholme, Sir Arthur, 206
 Nightingale, Florence, 110
 Northcote, Sir Stafford, 21, 85, 92,
 98-9, 102, 113, 116, 134
 Northcote-Trevelyan Report, 98-
 111, 122, 125
 Northern Political Union, 55
 Number of Civil Servants, 19, 23,
 164, 166

 Oaths, 42
 Official Secrets Acts, 19
 Order in Council—
 (of 1870), 121-2
 (of 1876), 135
 (of 1890), 148
 Ordnance Department, 66
 Organization of Offices, 30, 43,
 98-9
 Otway, Mr, 127, 138
 Outside Activities, 203
 Outside Appointments, 176
 Oxford, *see* Universities

 Packet service, 51-2
 Palgrave, Sir F, 95
 Palmerston, Lord, 111, 120
 Parliament and Civil Service, 45-6,
 55, 60, 114, 116, 138
 Parliamentary Candidature of Civil
 Servants, Committee on, 201-2
 Patronage, 24-5, 41, 65-6, 75-7, 99,
 101, 108, 113-14, 130, 137-8,
 167, 169-70
 in Indian administration, 78-81

- Patronage Secretary, 75-6, 137
 Paymaster General, 36
 Paymaster General of the Forces, 45, 48
 Payment, inequality of, 28
 system of, 27-30, 39-41
 Pensions, *see* Superannuation
 Perquisites, 28
 Petty, Lord Henry, 48-9
 Pitt, Wm., 51-2
 Playfair, Lyon, 129, 147
 Playfair Commission, 129-35
 Political Activities, 200-1
 Pollman and Keylock, Messrs., 65
 Poor Law Board, 94
 Post Office, 206-7
 Premiums, 25, 41
 Privy Council Office, 93, 155
 Probation, 66-7, 77
 Professional Posts, *see* Technical Officers
 Promotion, system of, 41, 67-8, 96, 99, 101, 108, 113-14, 130, 132-133, 142, 147-9, 174-7
 Promotions Committee, 175
 Public Accounts, Commission on, 22, 31, 36-44
 Public Expenditure, Committees on, 53, 59, 70
 Public Finance, Committee on, 48
 Public Income and Expenditure, Select Committee on (1828), 62-3, 66, 68-70
 Public Offices in 1797, List of, 34
 Public Service Organizations, 210
 Public Trustee's Office, 167
 Purchase, Appointment by, *see* Sale of Offices
 Purveying Department of War Office, 110

Quarterly Review, 120, 135, 139

 Radnor, Earl of, 82
 Receivers-General, 32-3, 47
 Recruitment, methods of, 24, 41, 98, 165-74
 Redundant List, 115

 Reform in Civil Service, Public attitude to, 120-1, 139
 Reorganization Committee of National Whitley Council, 179, 186-7
 Retirement, Age of, 158-60
 Revenue, Collection of, 32, 42
 Reversion, Grant of offices in, 53-4
 Ridley, Matthew, 142
 Ridley Commission, 142, 144-53, 203
 Road Board, 167, 170
 Rolit, Sir A., 149
 Romilly, Edward, 108 n, 111 n
 Rose, George, 52, 54-5
 Russell, Lord John, 92 n, 120

 Safeguards, 42, 98
 Salaries, 40-1, 45, 131, 135, 143, 150, *see also* Emoluments
 Duty on, 33, 41, 58
 Sale of Offices, 25, 41, 65
 Salisbury, Lord, 117
 Salt Office, 25 n, 30 n
 Schuster, Sir Claud, 183
 Scoones, W B, 139
 Second Division, 148, *see also* Lower Division
 Secretaries—
 Private, of Ministers, 137, 177
 of State, 23
 Selby-Bigge, Mr., 168
 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 190
 Shorthand, 144, 148, 152
 Sinecure Offices, 24 n, 38-9, 44, 49, 52-6
 Select Committee on, 54, 56
 Southborough Committee, 192
 Spearman, Sir Alex., 68, 90, 105, 108
 Stamp Office, 25
 Stamps, Commissioners of, 53, 65-6
 Steele, Mr., 48
 Stephen, Sir James, 104-5, 107
 Superannuation, 29, 41, 45, 59-65, 114-16, 155-60, 196-9
 of women, 197 n
 Superannuation Acts, 19, 155
 (of 1834), 64-5, 115 n
 (of 1859), 159, 196

- Superannuation Acts (*contd*)—
 (of 1909), 197
 (of 1935), 198, 209
 Superannuation—
 Allowances Bill (1828), 64
 Royal Commission on, 197
 Select Committee on, 114
- Tallies, 50
 Tax Office, 32
 Taxes, Collection of, 32
 Technical Officers, 165-6, 168-9,
 205-9
 Temporary Staffs, 170, 192
Times, The, 110-1
 Tomlin Commission, 150, 171, 175,
 177, 180, 183-4, 187, 191, 197 n
 198, 205, 208
 Trade, Board of, 93, 124, 125 n,
 166, 168
 Trades Disputes Act (1927), 201
 "Treasuries, Subordinate," 36
 Treasury, 23, 77, 88-90, 118
 control, 20, 67-9, 124, 153, 165,
 181-4
 Trevelyan, Sir Chas, 21, 80, 84-5,
 87-92, 97-9, 102, 114-15, 120,
 125, 138, 155-6
 Trinity College (Cambridge), 83
 Trollope, Anthony, 118 n, 120
- Unestablished Staff, 127
 numbers of, 198 n.
 see also Copying, Extra-Clerks
- Unions, 140
 Universities—
 • as sources of recruitment, 173,
 174 n
 Commission (1922), 83
 University Reform, influence on
 Civil Service, 78, 81-3
- Vansittart, Nicholas, 62
 Victualling Departments, peculation
 in, 51
 Villiers, George, 48 n.
- War, Secretary of State for, 23 n, 46
 War of 1914, Effects of, 165, 178,
 185, 189, 192-4
 Webley, Sir R. E., 140-1
 Wellesley, Marquess of, 79
 West, Sir Algernon, 146-7, 151-2
 West Indies, 48
Westminster Review, 109, 114
 Whitley Councils, 175, 178, 185-8
 Wilson, Sir Chas. Rivers, 203
 Wilson, Sir Horace, 183 n
- Women—
 employment of, 133, 152, 164-5,
 188-91
 and superannuation, 197 n
 Wood, John, 107 n
 Woodgate, Sir Alfred, 197 n
 Writers, 127-8, 131-2
- Yates, Edmund, 95



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